

King chairs meeting at RJ

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein Saturday chaired a meeting at Royal Jordanian's head office (RJ) to review its achievements in the first quarter of 1997. The meeting was attended by His Royal Highness Prince Faisal Ben Al Hussein, Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali, Chief of the Royal Court Awn Khasawneh, Deputy Prime Minister for Development Affairs and Minister of State for Prime Ministry Affairs Jawad Anani, Minister of Transport and Telecommunications Bassam Saket, Minister of Finance Suleiman Hafez, head of RJ's Board of Directors and General Manager Nader Thababi.

King pays condolences

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein Saturday called on the late retired Major General Fawaz Maher Bermami's residence and extended condolences to his family. Bermami's family thanked His Majesty for his noble gesture and wished him a happy and healthy life. The King was accompanied by His Royal Highness Prince Ali.

Saudi FM postpones visit to Jordan

RIYADH (AFP) — Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al Faisal said Saturday he had postponed a visit to Jordan scheduled for Sunday because of other commitments. Prince Saud told AFP his visit had been postponed to June 7 or 8 because he had to attend a two-day meeting of the Gulf Cooperation Council that opened in Riyadh on Saturday. Jordan announced the Saudi minister's visit on May 13 saying he would discuss "developments in the Middle East and bilateral relations."

Israeli officer killed in Hizbollah attack

TEL AVIV (AFP) — An Israeli officer was killed in a mortar attack by Hizbollah guerrillas in southern Lebanon, an army spokesman said Saturday. The soldier, who was not named, died of wounds sustained in Friday night's attack when eight mortar shells were fired at his patrol in the so-called "security zone" occupied by Israel in south Lebanon. Lebanese security sources said Friday that the soldier was seriously wounded near Markaba around the central sector of the occupied zone, sparking Israeli bombardment of nearby villages in retaliation. Ten Israeli soldiers have been killed and 45 wounded in southern Lebanon so far this year.

Iran, Iraq to swap bodies of soldiers

DUBAI (R) — Iran and Iraq will Sunday exchange the bodies of 87 soldiers killed during their 1980-88 war, the official Iranian news agency IRNA said Saturday. It quoted General Mir Faisal Baqerzadeh, head of Iran's Committee for the Missing in Action, as saying the remains of 20 Iranians would be exchanged for those of 67 Iraqi soldiers. But the missing in action and the POWs are still among the thorniest issues hindering efforts to improve ties between the former foes. Iran has said 5,000 to 10,000 prisoners are held by Iraq. Baghdad denies holding any Iraqis and says more than 20,000 Iraqis are held by Tehran.

Iran wants to develop ties with Bahrain

MANAMA (AFP) — The new administration in Iran wants to develop its ties with Bahrain, which has had a troubled relationship with the Islamic Republic, the Gulf News Agency (GNA) reported Saturday. "The new Iranian leadership expresses its desire to develop bilateral links between the two neighbours," Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati wrote in a message to Bahraini counterpart Mohammad Ben Mubarak Al Khalifa, GNA said. Bahrain's Sunni Muslim government accused Iran last year of trying to overthrow it.

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Jordanian-U.S. war games start; 2,500 soldiers in gear tame desert

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

QATRANEH — Jordanian and U.S. troops Saturday battled against a "mock enemy" as part of their first joint exercises this year with the participation of 2,500 soldiers, helicopters, jet fighters as well as heavy and light weapons.

The war games, code-named "Infinite Moonlight 97," is "an attempt to improve the training ability of the Jordanian troops," said Colonel Yahya Malkawi from the Training Directorate at the Army General Headquarters.

"The training is to enable us perform assigned missions on the international and national levels. Therefore, we conducted a number of joint exercises with brotherly and friendly armies. This exercise is part of these efforts," Col. Malkawi told reporters. He said two meetings were conducted with U.S. army officials to prepare for the 24-day-long exercise in the desert, 80 kilometres south of Amman.



Jordanian and American soldiers exercise together 80 kilometres south of Amman, Saturday. Codenamed "Infinite Moonlight 97," the joint exercises will continue for 24 days (Photo by Yousef 'Allan)

Lieutenant Colonel Taha Ghazow said a Jordanian infantry battalion of 500 soldiers, tanks, armoured vehicles, three Cobra helicopters and jet fighters took part in the manoeuvres.

Lieutenant Colonel Jon Inghram, commanding officer of the Battalion Landing Team 2/1 said that 1,500 marines with heavy and light weapons, light armoured vehicles, assault vehicles, 115mm Howitzers, heavy and light machine guns are taking part in the manoeuvres, with a squadron of several helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft and around 500 additional marines conducting their training at the King Faisal air base.

Colonel Inghram added that the U.S. troops, which arrived in Aqaba May 9 aboard three U.S. navy ships, also include "a marines new service support group which provides all our maintenance, transportation and supply support."

"We focused primarily on small unit training, and now as we progress into more complex training, at a company, battalion and brigade level, we will be using our mechanised vehicles and our helicopters in conjunction with our Jordanian army counterparts," the U.S. official said during a briefing to reporters.

"We will complete a combined armed exercise, using all our weapons with our Jordanian army counterparts in demonstrating and sharpening our skills and our ability to cooperate militarily," he said.

Col. Malkawi said that the U.S. troops' redeployment will start June 12 and be completed by June 19.

During Saturday's exercises, tens of Jordanian and American soldiers took part in a joint offensive with their light fighting vehicles, armed with small SMAW AT-4 rockets, while the Jordanian side used four Khalid tanks, and several armoured vehicles.

U.S. tanks launched the attack, firing heavily at their targets, to pave the way for Jordanian tanks to advance and hit the targets.

The manoeuvres are part of the military coordination between the two countries which was crowned last year by President Bill Clinton's decision to grant Jordan the title of non-North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) ally which made the Kingdom eligible for military assistance.

Last December, Jordan received a \$100 million in military aid from the U.S., as part of a total \$300 million assistance pledged by the Clinton administration, which includes 18 UH-1H helicopters, 50 M60A3 tanks, 250 M1088 and M109 trucks, two MK-4 personal boats, an air-sea rescue vessel as well as machine-guns and 1,000 night vision goggles.

The remaining \$200 million will be spent on sixteen F-16 jet fighters which the U.S. is expected to deliver by the end of 1997.

Israel says 3rd Palestinian land dealer found shot dead

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — Israeli officials said on Saturday a Palestinian known to have sold land to Jews was found shot dead near the West Bank city of Ramallah. Ali Mohammed Jumbour, 34, was the third land dealer found dead in the West Bank since Palestinian Justice Minister Fethi Abu Medeen was quoted in a published report on May 4 as saying that Palestinians who sold land to Jews faced execution. "The body of a land dealer was found near Ramallah. He was most probably killed for having been a land dealer. He was shot in the head," said police spokeswoman Linda Menuhin, adding the man was an Israeli citizen.

Palestinian police have refused to comment.

Preliminary investigations indicate he was investigated by Palestinian police at the start of last week. They explained to him that his fate would be similar to that of land dealer Farid Bashiti," Ms. Menuhin said.

Bashiti, 70, of Jerusalem, was found dead in Palestinian National Authority

(PNA) ruled Ramallah earlier in May. His funeral was repeatedly delayed and the burial site changed out of fear of violence.

Another dealer, Harbi Abu Sarah, in his 60s, was found shot dead near Ramallah and buried in his home village of Ain Yabrud nearby.

"He was a known land dealer who had sold to Israelis. He comes from the area of East Jerusalem," an Israeli official who did not want to be identified said concerning Jumbour.

Abu Medeen said at a news conference in Ramallah last Tuesday the PNA was interrogating "seven to 12" Palestinians on suspicion of selling land to Israelis.

Abu Medeen warned Arabs with Israeli citizenship that they too could face the death penalty if caught selling land to Jews. "I warn and advise those Palestinians who have become Israeli citizens that this will not protect them. They will be tried in one way or another," he told reporters.

Washington and an international human rights

group have urged Palestinian President Yasser Arafat to forbid retribution against land dealers.

The PNA has said the ban on selling land to Jews was necessary to halt the expansion of Jewish settlements in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Arab East Jerusalem, occupied by Israel since the 1967 Middle East war.

Palestinians see settlements as an Israeli attempt to thwart their goal of founding an independent state in those areas.

The PNA controls parts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip under a 1993 self-rule with Israel. Palestinian police are limited to operating in areas under their rule.

Israel has called the ban "racist" and linked it with the deaths of Bashiti and Abu Sarah. The PNA denies the charges.

An Israeli court has ordered the detention of a Palestinian man and a woman on suspicion of involvement in the murder of Bashiti, who held Israeli citizenship.

(See picture on page 12)

Arafat sends top two peace process negotiators to Egypt

GAZA CITY (AFP) — Palestinian President Yasser Arafat has sent his top two negotiators with Israel to Cairo for talks on Egypt's mediation effort to rescue the stalled peace process, the Palestinian agency Wafa said Saturday.

Saeed Erakat and Hassan Asfur have been tasked by the Palestinian cabinet to pursue contacts with Egyptian officials, the agency added.

The cabinet also denounced the "Israeli bulldozers which are destroying the peace process" and once again demanded a halt to construction work on a Jewish settlement in Arab east Jerusalem and to Jewish settlements in the West Bank, it said.

Mr. Arafat, who leaves Sunday for an Organisation of African Unity (OAU) summit opening in Harare, Wednesday, also appealed to African countries to actively support the Palestinian cause, Wafa said.

"African countries must strengthen their support for the rights of the Palestinian people to have an independent state with Jerusalem as the capital," Wafa quoted Mr. Arafat as saying.

Egypt's mediation bid is led by Ossama Baz, top advisor to Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, who met Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu late Thursday after talks with Mr. Arafat the previous day.

Mr. Baz hailed the "positive atmosphere" of his talks with the hardline Israeli premier but could not report any progress in bringing the two sides back to the negotiating table.

However, he will return to Israel next week to meet Mr. Netanyahu again, the prime minister's office said.

Mr. Netanyahu's office said Friday that Egypt was "seriously" considering Israeli proposals to get peace talks with the Pales-

tinians moving again after a 10-week crisis.

Israel's suggestions to end the crisis — already rejected by the Palestinians — mainly consist of building new homes for Palestinians to offset their anger at the Jewish settlement.

It has also offered to speed up talks on a final peace deal between the two sides and to freeze the demolition of Palestinian homes built without Israeli permits.

Mr. Arafat insists that peace talks cannot resume until Israel calls a halt to all its settlement building. The Palestinians also argue that Israel's ideas on a final peace settlement are so far removed from their bottom-line demands that accelerated negotiations would be pointless.

"These proposals are not only insulting, they are the best way of perpetuating the Israeli-Palestinian conflict," Mr. Erakat told AFP.

Palestinian Airlines fails to launch flights

GAZA CITY (AFP) — The first ever commercial flight by Palestinian Airlines which was to link Al Arish in Egypt to Jordan Sunday has been cancelled, Palestinian officials said Saturday.

"The indefinite postponement of the inaugural flight is due to reasons beyond our control," the director of the Palestinian Civil Aviation Authority Fayez Zaidan said without further explanation.

Mr. Zaidan told AFP that all flights between Al Arish and Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Cyprus and Turkey, due to begin next month, had also been put back.

"We don't know when the problems preventing us from launching these routes will be resolved," he said.

The Palestinians decided to launch the routes from Al Arish, near Egypt's border with the Gaza Strip, after Israel refused to let them open a new airport in Rafah in the southern tip of the strip.

The right-wing Israeli

government insists on having full control over security and checks on passengers and cargo at the new airport, something the Palestinians refuse.

The dispute, which stems from Israeli claims of concern over the possible smuggling of weapons and unauthorised people into the Palestinian-ruled areas, have held up approval for the airport and also construction of a port in Gaza City for months.

Palestinian Airlines has two Fokker 50 planes donated by the Netherlands. The planes took Palestinian Muslims to the annual pilgrimage in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, from Al Arish this year.

The Rafah airport was authorised under a 1995 autonomy accord, and its opening is seen as a symbol of Palestinian ambitions to sovereignty and a much-needed boost for the economic autonomy of the territories, which now must export most of their goods via Israel.

Arab states at U.N. condemn Turkey's incursion in Iraq

UNITED NATIONS (R) — Arab countries at the United Nations Friday condemned Turkey's incursion into northern Iraq, saying Ankara needed to withdraw its troops immediately and unconditionally.

Lebanon's Ambassador Samir Moubarak, head of the Arab group, told a news conference, "We cannot accept this aggression taking place by Turkey and it is high time to see the Turkish troops withdraw immediately."

He said the countries had drawn up a statement condemning Turkey's action, saying it was "in flagrant violation" of international law and a 1926 treaty setting the borders between the two countries.

Thousands of Turkish troops, backed by air power, poured into northern Iraq on May 14 in pursuit of separatist Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) rebels who they say use the region as a base to launch raids into southeast Turkey.

The troops are in the Iraqi Kurdish enclave that was once set up as a "safe haven" by Western allies after the Gulf war when rebellious Kurds were pursued by Baghdad's troops.

Mr. Moubarak said the Arab

group statement drew the Security Council's attention to the "obligations under the U.N. charter." But he said the group had not demanded an urgent council meeting and he did not know if they would do so.

He said the Arab group also "opposes the establishment of any security arrangements under any pretext which would violate the sovereignty of Iraq or the unity of its territory."

Iraq said Saturday Turkish warplanes bombed villages in northern Iraq, killing or wounding 20 civilian Kurds, and urged non-aligned and Islamic countries to stop the Turkish foray.

"Six Turkish planes bombed villages in the sector of Rawanduz hitting them with rockets and bombs. The bombardment led to the killing and injuring of 20 Iraqi Kurdish civilians," the papers said.

The official Iraqi News Agency (INA) said Foreign Minister Mohammad Saeed Sahaf wrote to the Non-Aligned Movement and the Organisation of Islamic Countries demanding action against the Turkish forces. He said Iraq's pleas to the United Nations and the Security Council had gone unanswered.

Father sets his own child on fire; Nidal may not make it — doctors

By Rana Hussein
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Police Saturday apprehended a 31-year-old man who allegedly set his 11-year-old son on fire in the Nadif suburb of Amman, official sources said.

Atef Ghandour was arrested one day after locking his child Nidal in a bathroom, pouring kerosene over him, then setting him on fire, one official source said.

According to the source, Nidal and two of his brothers were studying in the front yard of their house on Zeid Ben Khatab Street, while their father slept.

The children started screaming, the source said, and the noise awakened their father who became upset, went outside and told them to tear up their books.

"Nidal refused to tear up

his book, so his father took him to the bathroom, poured kerosene on him and asked his wife to set their child on fire," the source said.

"The mother refused, so the father, using his cigarette lighter lit the kerosene, then minutes later he put out the flames and rushed his son to the nearest hospital," the source added.

One neighbour, in describing the incident, said she heard her neighbour screaming and when she went to check the matter she saw the mother of the child outside her house shouting for help.

"When we went to check the matter, Atef (Ghandour) prevented us from entering the house, and all we could see was smoke and flames coming from his house," the neighbour said.

One of Mr. Ghandour's four children described his

father as an abusive man, stating: "My father used to beat us and beat our mother regularly." The 15-year-old child told the Jordan Times.

The neighbours informed the Jordan Times that Mr. Ghandour was released from detention last week after spending one year in prison on car theft charges.

The neighbours added that the mother of the victim was also admitted to the same hospital suffering from a shock.

The attending doctor at the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) at Al Bashir Hospital where the child was admitted Saturday told the Jordan Times that the child's chances of survival are slim.

"Eighty per cent of the boy's body is burnt, and it is more likely that he will not survive," the doctor said.

Turkish army presses government on anti-fundamentalist measures

ANKARA (AFP) — Top military commanders were expected to urge Islamic Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan to implement an army-backed measures package to curb Islamist radicals at a meeting of Turkey's highest advisory body Saturday.

"Turkey is fully committed to the secular principles of the state founded by our great leader Mustafa Kemal Ataturk (in 1923)," General İlhan Kiliç, secretary-general of the National Security Council (MGK), said at a ceremony before the meeting opened.

The MGK groups the president, the prime minister, foreign and interior ministers and top military commanders, and is widely seen as an instrument for army influence on Turkey's key security and foreign policies.

The MGK strongly urged the government in February and April to implement a package of measures against rising Islamist extremism.

The proposed measures included the closure of privately-run Koranic courses and the state-run secondary schools with Islamic education, the sacking of religious extremists from state jobs and a ban on fundamentalist propaganda.

But Welfare's reluctance to put some of these into effect has escalated tension in recent weeks.

In April and May, Turkish governors closed down scores of illegally-operated Koranic courses throughout the country and security forces rounded up several people in Islamic dress.

Under a law adopted by Ataturk's administration in the 1920s, Islamic dress is prohibited, but the ban is widely violated.

Welfare's resistance to the army-backed crackdown plan has mainly concentrated on the state-run secondary schools with Islamic education. Mr. Erbakan said

in early May that the closure of those schools was "against human rights" and that "people have the right to teach their religion to their children."

In widely condemned remarks, Welfare deputy Halil Ibrahim Celik warned the closure of such schools "could lead to bloodshed" and that "Turkey could turn into a second Algeria."

"At today's meeting, the military commanders will emphasise their determination for the implementation of the crackdown the private television channel NTV said.

In theory, the MGK is a consultative body, but its

resolutions are traditionally implemented to the letter by the government.

Saturday's MGK meeting came amid plans by Welfare and its coalition partners, the conservative True Path Party of Foreign Minister Tansu Ciller, to call for early general elections in October or November.

"A possible election does not affect the military's position. The army wants the crackdown plan to be implemented," NTV said.

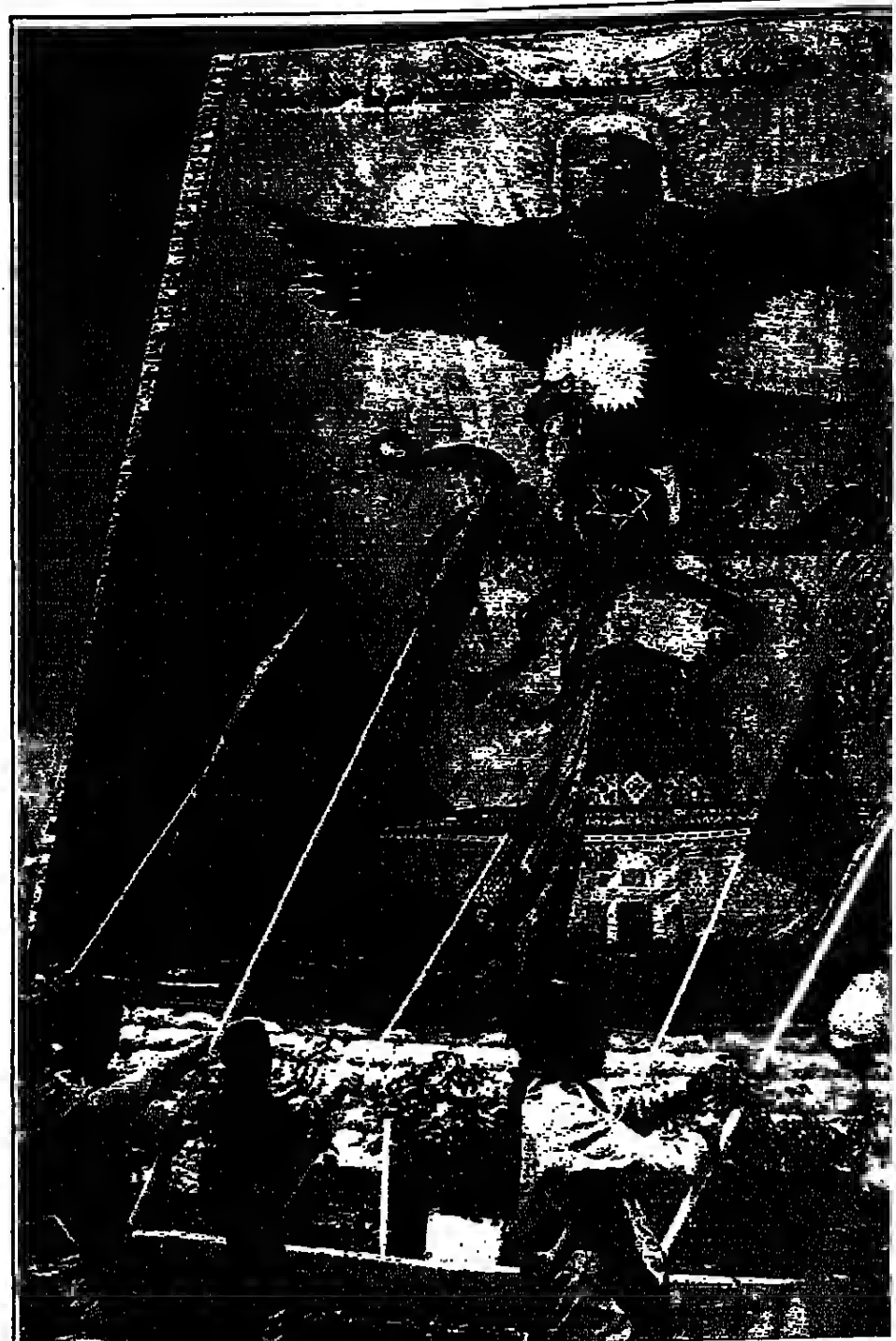
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HAMAS PROTEST: Young Palestinian scouts march in front of a Hamas poster on Saturday in Hebron as around one thousand people marched through the Islamic university here to demand the release of Palestinians held in Israeli jail. Some 3,000 Palestinians are detained in Israeli prisons but Palestinian National Authority demands for their release have been rejected by the right-wing government of Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu (AFP photo)

Gulf states condemn Turkey, Israel

RIYADH (AFP) — Gulf Arab foreign ministers strongly condemned Turkey for its military incursion in northern Iraq and Israel for its hardline stance on the peace process as they opened a two-day meeting here Saturday.

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) ministers also said they hoped the election of moderate cleric Mohammad Khatami as Iranian president would herald better ties between the Islamic republic and the Gulf.

Qatar's Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad Ben Jassem Al Thani told the GCC meeting: "We strongly condemn the Turkish incursion in northern Iraq, which is a violation of Iraq's sovereignty and territorial integrity."

He called on Turkey, which has 30,000 troops in northern Iraq hunting down Turkish Kurd rebels, to "pull its troops out from within Iraq's borders."

Sheikh Hamad also lashed out at Israel's right-wing government which he said was responsible for the deadlock in the peace process and called on the Jewish state to respect its agreements with the Palestinians.

Of the Iranian president-elect, the Qatari minister said he hoped he could bring "the development of relations between Iran and the GCC" which have been dogged by a territorial dispute between the Islamic republic and GCC member the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

The GCC groups the UAE with Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and Bahrain.

Baghdad calls for three-way alliance with Iran and Syria

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraq Saturday called for the creation of a three-way alliance with Iran and Syria even though it has yet to resume full ties with its two neighbours.

"A normalisation between Iraq, Iran and Syria and the establishment of cooperation between these three countries is capable of changing the balance of power in favour of Arabs and Iranians and bringing peace and security to the region," wrote the Babel newspaper, run by Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's eldest son Uday.

"Iraq, Syria and Iran are called upon to create a force to oppose the Imperialist-Zionist front and to enter the 21st century with brotherly and cordial relations based on cooperation and mutual respect," Babel added.

Syria and Iraq, ruled by rival branches of the Baath Party, have had troubled relations since President Saddam became Iraqi president in 1979.

Iraq broke off diplomatic ties with its neighbour in 1980 to protect Syrian arms supplies to Iran at the start of the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war.

In 1982 Syria closed its border with Iraq along with the Kirkuk-Banias oil pipeline, depriving Baghdad of its only Mediterranean outlet.

However, an Iraqi official said Syria could decide soon to reopen the border after a Syrian business delegation visited Baghdad last week.

"The sending of a Syrian economic delegation to Baghdad and the success of its mission shows that there are good chances of normalisation between Baghdad and Damascus," Babel said.

Iran and Iraq have still not normalised their relations nine years after the end of their war, with the issue of prisoners and missing the main obstacle to a rapprochement.

But Babel said: "The change sought after by Iraqis (after the victory of moderate candidate Mohammad Khatami in the presidential election eight days ago) is not only on the domestic front."

Mr. Khatami's declarations "show a desire for new ties with the Arabs," it said.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Egyptian envoy due in Israel

CAIRO (AFP) — Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak said Saturday his top advisor will return to Israel on Sunday to obtain the Israeli's response to Palestinian demands aimed at ending the deadlock in the peace process. Israeli officials had asked Mr. Mubarak's envoy Osama Al Baz for more time to examine Palestinian proposals made last week after a summit between the Egyptian president and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, he said.

"Mr. Baz will leave Sunday to obtain the Israeli reaction and will then communicate that to the Palestinians," Mr. Mubarak said during a meeting with Egyptian intellectuals and journalists. Mr. Baz shuttled between meetings with Mr. Netanyahu and Mr. Arafat last week following the summit between Mr. Mubarak and the Israeli premier in the Egyptian Red Sea resort of Sharm Al Sheikh.

Arab observers head to Algeria

CAIRO (AFP) — A delegation of 60 Arab League observers left Cairo for Algiers on Saturday to take part in supervision of the Algerian legislative elections next week, a league official said. Algeria's 16.8 million registered voters go to the polls on Thursday but the campaign has been marred by the deaths of more than 120 people in massacres and three bloody car bomb attacks since it opened on May 15.

The Arab League delegation leader Said Kamal said recently that the observers would be working in 48 constituencies alongside the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and U.N. observers. The 22-member Arab League sent 43 observers to monitor the presidential elections in Algeria, a member state, in 1995.

Egypt offering officers bonuses

ASSIUT (AP) — The interior ministry is offering bonuses including an extra \$150 a month to police officers willing to serve in southern Egypt, where Islamists have been waging a violent campaign against the government. Security officials said a handbook distributed by the ministry promises police officers \$150 a month in addition to their salaries. The average salary of a police officer is about \$205 a month. The officers will also get 10 days off each month, instead of the regular eight days, said the officials, who spoke on customary condition on anonymity. The move is to encourage qualified officers to serve in dangerous areas of southern Egypt, where 37 officers have been killed in fighting with militants in the past five years.

Libya calls for Arab summit

MUSCAT (AFP) — Libya wants to organise a summit of Arab leaders in July to coincide with the anniversary of the birth of the Prophet Muhammad, a Libyan envoy visiting Oman said Saturday. "Libya wants an Arab summit in July to study the future of the Arab World and draw up a joint Arab project for the 21st century," General Mustafa Kharoufi said during a Gulf tour to hand out messages from Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi. He said Libya wants the summit to be held around July 18, the anniversary of the birth of the Prophet Muhammad, in the Saudi Holy City of Mecca, Libya or Egypt.

Lebanon charges leftist labour leader

BEIRUT (R) — A Beirut investigating magistrate Saturday charged leftist Labour leader Elias Abi Rizk with impersonating the head of the General Labour Confederation (CGTL) and usurping office by force, judicial sources said.

Magistrate Saeed Mirza issued an arrest warrant against Mr. Abi Rizk after charging him with the offences carrying at least seven years imprisonment, they added.

Mr. Abi Rizk had spent Friday night in detention at the courts of justice after a Beirut prosecutor interrogated him initially in connection with the

charges, brought against him by rival labour leader Ghneim Zoghbi.

The detention of Mr. Abi Rizk was protested against by opposition members of parliament. Deputy Boutros Harb said if the government did not deal with union issues on a sound basis "citizens will begin to fear defending their rights via the judicial system."

Mr. Zoghbi and Mr. Abi Rizk have swapped accusations since controversial CGTL elections last month which split the confederation and resulted in the election of separate leaderships headed by each of them.

Mr. Abi Rizk's supporters elected him in the morning and Mr. Ghneim's supporters elected him in the afternoon. Each says the election of the other was invalid.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the pan-Arab Workers Federation have recognised Mr. Abi Rizk's reelection and the International Confederation of Arab Trade Unions has refused to accept a member of the pro-Zoghbi leadership as Lebanon's representative.

Mr. Zoghbi is due to leave Beirut later Saturday for Geneva to attend a

conference of the ILO. Mr. Abi Rizk was detained Friday as he prepared to leave for an international labour summit in Copenhagen.

The Lebanese government recognised Mr. Zoghbi's leadership. Mr. Abi Rizk, who was seeking reelection after heading the CGTL for the past four years, has been a thorn in the side of billionaire Prime Minister Rafik Al Hariri.

As leader he repeatedly called for pay rises, strikes and demonstrations and accused the government of ignoring the plight of the poor.

Yemeni beheaded in S. Arabia for burning death

RIYADH (AP) — A Yemeni convicted of murdering a man by setting him on fire was beheaded Saturday in the southern city of Hael, the Interior Ministry said.

Ahmad Yahya Muzari'aa was sentenced to death after a court found him guilty of throwing gasoline on Mous-

sa Ali Asiri, a Saudi national, and then setting him ablaze, the ministry said.

It did not say when the crime took place.

The execution raised to 44 the number of people beheaded this year in Saudi Arabia. Twenty-three were executed in May alone. Last year, 71 people were executed.

Courts in this oil-rich kingdom impose the death penalty for crimes such as rape, murder and drug trafficking.

Human rights groups have criticised the executions and have said defendants are often denied fair trials.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

15:35 French Programmes
16:05 Global Family
16:30 Energy Express
16:50 Doc. — Our World
17:15 American Chart Show
18:10 French Programmes
19:00 News in French
19:30 Headline News
19:35 Fresh Prince of Bel-Air
20:00 Cinema, Cinema, Cinema
20:30 The Churchillis
21:10 Renegade
22:00 News in English
22:30 One West Walkiki
23:15 Sisters

PRAYER TIMES

03:53 Fajr
05:26 (Sunrise) Doha
12:33 Dhuhr
16:14 'Asr
19:40 Maghreb
21:13 'Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweidha, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church Tel.
632785.
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation

Tel. 637440.

De la Salle Church Tel. 661757.

Terra Sancta Church Tel. 622266

Anglican Church Tel. 652826.

Armenian Catholic Church Tel.
771331.

Armenian Orthodox Church
Tel. 775261.

St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.

Armanian International Church
Tel. 827126

Evangelical Lutheran Church
Tel. 824328.

German-speaking Evangelical
Congregation Tel. 845457

The Latter-Day Saints Tel.
654932.

Church of Nazarene Tel.
675691.

The Evangelical Local Church
in Amman Tel. 811295

English-speaking
Latin Catholics Parish Tel.
614190.

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology
Fine weather conditions will prevail during the day becoming cool at night with winds northwesterly moderate to active. In Aqaba,

winds will be northerly moderate and seas calm.

Min./Max. temp.

Amman 15/27

Aqaba 21/35

Deserts 12/31

Jordan Valley 22/34

Yesterday's high temperatures:

Amman 26, Aqaba 30 Humidity

readings: Amman 35 per cent.

Aqaba 25 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:

Dr. Mokheles Mazharah 820425

Dr. Wissam Hazyayin 748563

Dr. Muntaser Al Qaraini 779959

Dr. Abdul Hadi Tayyem 620115

Firas pharmacy 661912

Ferdows pharmacy 778336

Al Asema pharmacy 637055

Naioukh pharmacy 623672

Al Salam pharmacy 636730

Yacoub pharmacy 644945

Shmeisani pharmacy 637660

Najib pharmacy 847632

IRBID:

Dr. Ghazi Ta'anneh 250080

Al Quds pharmacy (—)

ZARQA:

Dr. Salah Safarini 987565

Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111

Civil Defence Department 661111

Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 630341

Civil Defence Emergency 199

Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777

Fire Brigade 617101

Blood Bank 775121

Highway Police 843402

Traffic Police 896390

Public Security Dept. 630321

Hotel Complaints 605800

Price Complaints 661176

Water & Sewerage Complaints 897467

Amman Municipality Complaints 787111

Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121

Overseas Calls 010230

Central Amman Telephone Repairs 623101

Abdali Tel. Repairs 661101

Jordan Television 773111

Radio Jordan 774111

Water Authority 680100

J. Electricity Authority 815615

Electric Power Co. 636381

RJ Flight Information 08-53200

Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:

Hussein Medical Centre 813813/32

Khalidi Maternity 642816/6

Akileh Maternity 643441/2

Jabal Amman Maternity 642362

Mallas, J. Amman 636140

Palestine, Shmeisani 607071

Shmeisani Hospital 669131

University Hospital 845845

Al-Muasher Hospital 667227/9

The Islamic, Abdali 666126/37

Al-Ahli, Abdali 664164/6

Italian, Al-Muhajreen 777101/3

Al-Bashir 771111/26

Army, Marka 891611/15

Queen Alia Hospital 602240/50

Amal Hospital 674155

The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 865199

ZARQA:

Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323

Zarqa National Hospital (09)900560

Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986732

Al Hikma Modern Hospital (09)990990

IRBID:

Princess Basma Hospital 1021275555

Greek Catholic Hospital 1021272275

Ibn Al Nafees Hospital 1021247100

AQABA:

Princess Haya Hospital (03)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08)53200-5, where it should always be verified. Information on other flights can be supplied on phone 08 (52700)

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights

09:30 Jeddah (RJ)

10:00 Bombay (RJ)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights

06:45 Beirut (RJ)

07:45 Aqaba (RJ)

11:30 Frankfurt, Brussels (RJ)

12:00 Tunis (RJ)

12:15 Vienna (RJ)

12:30 Rome (RJ)

12:40 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)

13:20 Athens (RJ)

13:25 London (RJ)

21:00 New Delhi (RJ)

21:10 Cairo (RJ)

21:20 Beirut (RJ)

21:25 Jeddah (RJ)

21:55 Damascus (RJ)

22:00 Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)

22:25 Singapore, Jakarta (RJ)

22:40 Bangkok (RJ)

23:45 Sanaa (RJ)

Other Flights

12:00 Sanaa (IY)

12:00 Jeddah (SV)

13:35 Bahrain (GF)

14:25 Moscow (SU)

16:35 Moscow (SU)

22:25 Cairo (MS)

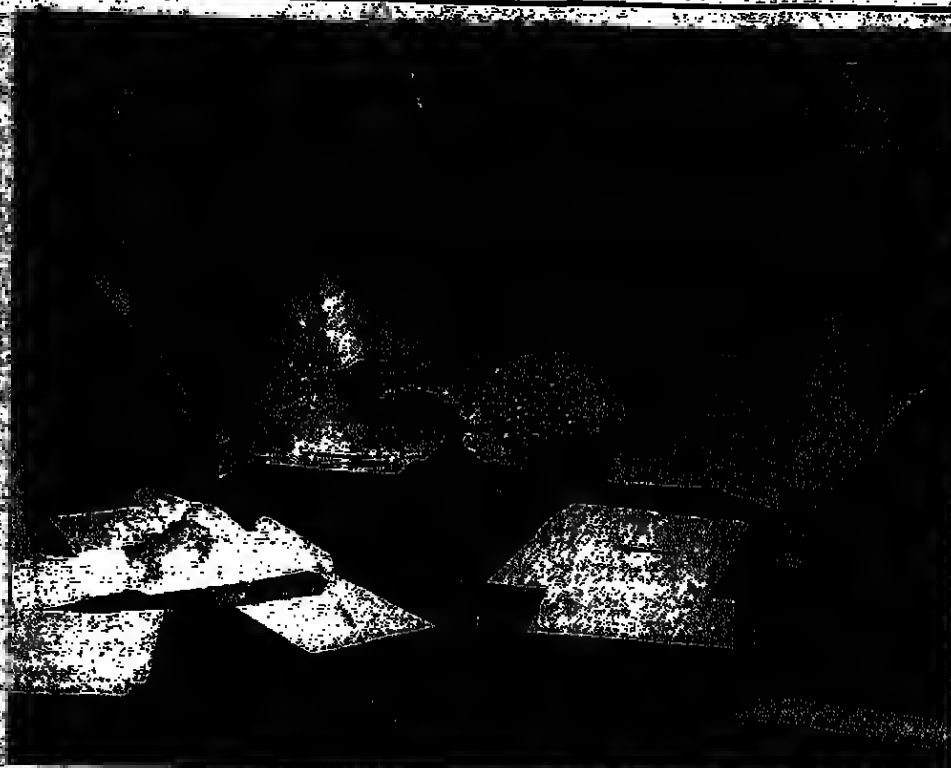
00:45 Amsterdam (KL)

02:00 Cairo (MS)

07:00 Beirut (ME)

07:55 London (BA)

08:15 Tel Aviv (LY)



HRH Princess Basma Saturday meets with visiting Executive Director of the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) Nafis Sadik (left) in Amman. (Photo: UNFPA)

UNFPA chief pledges continued cooperation in population concerns

AMMAN (J.T.) — HRH Princess Basma Saturday met with visiting Executive Director of the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) Nafis Sadik and stressed that Jordan was determined to pursue cooperation with the fund and was appreciative of the fund's continued assistance to population-related projects in the Kingdom.

Dr. Sadik said the UNFPA will maintain cooperation with the concerned Jordanian institutions, particularly with the National Population Commission.

Present at the meeting was UN Resident Representative in Jordan Jürgen Lissner, as well as other officials.

Surgeons remove 27 litres of fat from 38-year-old American patient

By Tanya Habbouja
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — During a record breaking surgical operation, 27 litres of fat were successfully removed from an American plastic surgery patient last week, according to surgeon Ghaleb Shubailat.

Arlene Kemp, a 38-year-old city engineer from New Jersey, came to Jordan to undergo the surgery that American plastic surgeons were reluctant to conduct, requiring high fat removal using the Ultrasonic Assisted Lipoplasty (UAL) method.

The UAL method was introduced to Jordan in April by Italian plastic surgeon Michael Zocchi, innovator of the ultrasonic technique.

Dr. Zocchi taught the method to Dr. Shubailat, chairman of the Board of the Amman Surgical Hospital, and the two formed a partnership.

The UAL technique uses an ultrasonic device which "blasts" specific fat cells, removing the oil content of the cells but preserving the structure," Dr. Zocchi said in an earlier interview with the Jordan Times.

Dr. Zocchi asserted that UAL was far less traumatic than traditional liposuction and could be performed on elderly and obese patients.

The elderly and obese are generally restricted from undergoing liposuction, as it is a danger because of blood clots and anaesthesia during the procedure.

Weighing in at 145 kilograms before Monday's operation, Ms. Kemp had a long history of battling with her weight.

Ms. Kemp weighed 185 kilograms in 1994 and began a diet in which she lost 10 kilograms.

After that, I underwent several different surgeries, including thigh liposuction, gas liposuction, and a tummy tuck," Ms. Kemp said in the Jordan Times.

However, while these methods were an improvement, it hardened her skin and left her looking like a "pumpkin," according to husband Leonard Kemp.

When Ms. Kemp was informed of the UAL technique by her plastic surgeon, she immediately "began doing her homework," Ms. Kemp said.

After her plastic surgeon advised that he was comfortable performing the surgery, she came to Amman to meet Dr. Zocchi.

After consulting Dr. Zocchi, Ms. Kemp underwent an MRI to determine whether

she could safely undergo UAL.

"I anxiously looked forward for one year to this," Dr. Zocchi said. "He finally called me a few weeks ago and said there was an opportunity in Jordan."

Dr. Zocchi regarded this case as a huge challenge, and called me to assist his operation," Dr. Shubailat said. "He was satisfied with my team and confident that we could succeed if we operated together."

According to Dr. Shubailat, the operation lasted 10 hours, during which they removed 27 litres of fat, the highest amount ever removed during one operation.

The highest amount he had removed was 22 litres, so this was a risky procedure," Dr. Shubailat said.

Risks can include embolism (clotting of blood which blocks the lungs), chest infection, and any other danger imposed during long surgeries," he said.

Dr. Shubailat said the 27 litres of fat removed Monday was a breakthrough and would pave the way for future cases dealing with severe obesity.

When the Jordan Times asked if any deaths had resulted from UAL operations, Dr. Shubailat replied that no such deaths had occurred.

There have been deaths as a result of poor liposuction operations, but not from UAL," he said.

Dr. Shubailat maintained that Ms. Kemp was in "fine, stable condition."

The patient told the Jordan Times that she felt like a "new person" and that she was "happy."

"It may take 10 to 15 months before the full results are evident, but I should lose 50 pounds (23 kilograms)," she said.

Ms. Kemp said that the American society was a "visual one" and that a positive self-image could be the difference between a successful and unsuccessful company.

She said her ultimate goal was to develop more than a "visual image" and to become a "strong, confident woman."

Dr. Shubailat said that the Amman Surgical Hospital would be a "centre for treating obesity."

He said the first doctor in the Middle East to conduct the UAL method.

Amman's 3rd district readies for fall parliamentary elections

By Francesca Chiari
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — With around six months to the next parliamentary elections, the major formations in Amman's 3rd district have set up special committees to prepare the election campaign and to select candidates.

Although the parties' tickets are still far from being finalised, official announcements have already been made regarding the nominations of some leading figures for Amman's "hot" third district.

The general assembly of the Islamic Action Front (IAF) Amman Third District branch, in an emergency meeting held last week, nominated IAF Secretary General Isahq Farhan, 42nd legislature Deputy Ibrahim Zaid Kilani, and Circassian Walid Shukri Shabso to run in the upcoming elections.

In the meanwhile, in a recent interview with the Jordan Times,

President of the Jordanian Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party Khalil Haddadin also confirmed his intention to run for reelection in Amman's Third District.

Including the Sports City, Jabal Amman, and Abdalt areas, Amman's Third District is considered to reflect the elite's political pattern and it elects one Circassian, one Christian and three Muslim deputies.

In the 1993 parliamentary elections, Dr. Keilani won the first Muslim seat, with 9,134 votes, followed by former Prime Minister Taher Masri (8,789 votes) and former Minister of Industry and Trade Ali Abul Ragheb (8,162 votes).

The Third District also elected the only woman in the 12th Parliament, Toyjan Feisal, who won the seat allocated for the Circassian minority.

The Christian seat was won by Mr. Haddadin.

The party has not yet finalised a

candidates list, apart from my nomination in Amman's Third District, for the Christian seat," Mr. Haddadin said.

His party, which announced its consolidation with Al Haq, headed by Mohammed Zobi, and the Arab Land Party, headed by Mohammad Ouran, into the Jordanian Nationalist Democratic Front (JNDF) late February, is seeking to field candidates under a single ticket with all opposition parties, including the Islamists, Mr. Haddadin added.

"We are keen on working together with the other opposition parties, but if we do not reach an agreement, we will field our candidates on our own," he asserted.

Though "it is still too early to list the major points the election campaign will focus on," Mr. Haddadin said, a special committee is studying the next election campaign's strategy.

Together with the Islamists and the leftists, a third major party, the

centrists of the newly formed National Constitutional Party (NCP) are also getting ready for the upcoming elections.

NCP Deputy Secretary General for Economic and Financial Affairs Anis Muasher told the Jordan Times "a special committee is working on the election campaign, and the study should be completed soon."

Though Mr. Muasher judged "not wise" to hazard a forecast on how many candidates the NCP will field and how many seats it will win, his colleague Hakim Kheir, NCP deputy secretary general for information affairs said in an interview earlier with the Jordan Times that he counts on winning "20 to 30 seats" in the 80-member Lower House of Parliament.

For his part, Dr. Farhan had told the Jordan Times he expected the IAF to win "around 20 seats" in the 1997 elections for the Kingdom's 13th legislature.

Leadership academy meeting to draw 160 attendees

AMMAN (J.T.) — Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali Saturday met with Adel Safi, director of the United Nations University International Leadership Academy (UNU/ILA) to discuss the agenda of the academy's scheduled meeting today in which 160 participants from 63 nations will participate.

Jordan will be represented at the meeting by Dr. Majali, Minister of Foreign Affairs Faysal Tarawneh, Deputy Prime Minister Jawad Anani and Senator Zeid Rifai.

Dr. Safi later told the Jordan News Agency, Petra, that the academy's choice of Amman as a venue to host the month-long meeting has political and cultural dimensions.

He said the UNU/ILA is considered the first U.N. institution whose mission is to promote the making of young leaders.

Referring to the academy's programme, he said that 650 individuals from 80 nations have applied to the programme.

The meeting will be held under the patronage of Her Majesty Queen Noor.

Police search for clues in burning death of elderly Amman woman

By Rana Hussein
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Officials are investigating the death of a 70-year-old woman who was found burnt beyond recognition Saturday in her home in Ashrafieh suburb.

The body of Nimrah Yousef Jawil was found in her bedroom by Civil Defence Department (CDD) fire-fighters who were called by the neighbours to put out a fire in the woman's house.

"Until now, it is not clear if it was an act of arson; the cause of the fire is still being investigated," an official source told the Jordan Times Saturday.

The source added that the fire, which broke out at around 2:00 p.m., only engulfed the woman's bedroom.

In the incidents in the Kingdom, six people, including three children, were killed in various accidents, police and CDD reports said.

In Sabab area, CDD frogmen Saturday retrieved the body of a 25-year-old man from a water well in Al Iskhan neighbourhood, the reports said.

One official told the Jordan Times that Mahmoud Saleh "might have committed suicide by jumping in the three-metre deep well."

The official, speaking on condition of anonymity, stated that the man was mentally ill.

Also killed in a drowning incident was Musa Abdul Kader, 20, who was swimming in Ghadeer Shamieh area, the reports said.

In the Jizah area, a 58-year-old jockey was killed after falling from his horse during a horse endurance

competition, the reports said.

Abdel Ra'ouf Mohammad was killed when he fell from his horse minutes before reaching the finish line, the reports said.

He was rushed to King Hussein Medical Centre but was declared dead on arrival.

Road accidents claimed the lives of three children during the weekend, the reports said.

The report identified the deceased as Rami Fawzi, one, who was struck by a vehicle driven by a 42-year-old man in Ashrafieh; Ziad Mustafa, one, who was accidentally run over by his father's trailer in Jerash, and Safa Fathi, six, who was killed by a vehicle which rolled down a hill in South Marka.

Physicians highlight signals, symptoms of osteoporosis

By Nadia Munkhils
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — At a scientific-medical lecture at Ibn Al-Haytham Hospital Friday evening, doctors claimed that 25 per cent of women who have reached the age of menopause die of osteoporosis.

According to endocrinologist Mohammed Al-Nouri, osteoporosis is a disease that causes bone fragility, making a patient susceptible to fractures and breakage.

The disease causes a decrease in bone mass which leads to the dysfunction of the bones, said Dr. Ghassan Maalouf, orthopaedist and chairman of the Lebanese Committee of Osteoporosis Treatment.

Bone fragility grows with age, and continuous bone fracture can lead to serious damage in the future, said Ibn Al-Haytham Hospital Director Mohammed Nour.

Intensive physical workouts, smoking and alcohol consumption all lead to the

loss of oestrogen in the body which consequently leads to a decrease of calcium, thus creating strong possibilities for osteoporosis, Dr. Maalouf said.

Osteoporosis, however, is a treatable disease, explained Dr. Nabil Amari, orthopaedist, "light exercise, the prevention of long sitting hours, consuming healthy foods rich in vitamins and minerals and decreasing the intake of high fat foods and preservatives are simple ways of protecting the body from the disease," he explained.

At Ibn Al-Haytham Hospital, which tests patients for osteoporosis, has been equipped with a Lunar bone densitometer machine, which can measure bone and calcium densities in the bones in a few minutes, using unharmed rays," Dr. Nour said.

Recent studies have shown that 25 per cent of women who have reached menopause die of the disease while only three per

cent of women in the same age group die of breast cancer, which is known to be the most dangerous disease affecting women.

Dr. Maalouf explained the importance of continuous medical check-ups and the use of the lunar bone densitometer, especially after the age of 35 when a person begins to lose one per cent of bone density annually.

"Clinical examinations cannot detect the disease in its primary stages which may lead to the loss of 30 per cent of the bone density until the person reaches the progressive stages of the disease," Dr. Maalouf said.

Several signs can indicate the presence of the disease: continuous back and bone ache, consequent bone fractures and visible shortage in length along with difficulties in breathing that occur because of damage to the spinal cord, Dr. Maalouf concluded.

The lecture was held to draw attention to the disease and that it can affect both men and women.

Doctors to plan strategy to ensure increase in overtime allowances

By Lola Keilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Government physicians will hold a meeting today to discuss a cabinet decision, last Tuesday which granted public health doctors overtime allowances as of June rather than retroactively to January 1997, said Bassem Kiswani, member of the Jordan Medical Association (JMA) board.

The JMA regrets the government decision, especially that the increase was included in the 1997 budget, endorsed by a Royal Decree and recommended by both ministers of health (in the previous and current governments) Aref Batayneh and Ashraf Kurdi," said Ja'far Hunuti, former member of the JMA board.

The recommendations and agreement were not taken into consideration during the Cabinet meeting," he said.

The Cabinet decided, last week, to introduce overtime allowances to public health employees as of June 1997, while the memorandum of understanding, signed between the JMA and the government in October last year, stated that the allowances should be granted in January.

The meeting, which will bring together 60 public health doctors, should present recommendations to the JMA board on measures to be taken in light of the government's breach of the memorandum of understanding, said Dr. Kiswani.

President of the JMA Bassem Dajani also asked for an urgent meeting to be held on Thursday with the prime minister, said Dr. Kiswani. He added that the meeting, which has not yet been fixed, will target the current government decision.

For the past two years the JMA and other professional associations

have been pressing the government to "correct the injustices" of a Unified Allowances Law passed in 1988. That law actually withdrew benefits and reduced the income of doctors and other professionals, said Dr. Dajani, in an earlier interview.

"The overtime spent by a doctor at the Ministry of Health hospitals is equal to one-third of his/her regular hours, but his/her overtime allowances are less than what he/she would receive during regular hours," said Dr. Kiswani.

He added that a newly employed doctor's overtime is 500 fils per each overtime hour.

A second demand will be to increase the basic salaries of public health doctors in order to raise the retirement wages which are calculated on the basic salary.

"The major bulk of public health doctors' salaries are allowances, while retirement pensions are based on the basic salary," said Dr. Kiswani.

The Cabinet decision, which was rejected by professional associations, also ignored the demands of other public sector employees, such as agricultural engineers, journalists and geologists.

A statement issued by the association Thursday called for a general assembly meeting, Friday, for all public employees who are members of the association to discuss the Cabinet decision.

"Next Friday's meeting, which will bring together more than 1,000 public health doctors and other government employees, should come up with good recommendations," said Dr. Kiswani.

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Amman - Jordan

CONCERT

Concert by Syrian guitarist Amman at Cervantes, Amman at 8:30 p.m. (Tel. 640833)

Afghan Taliban report pushing back opposition attack in north

PUL-I-KHUMRI, Afghanistan (R) — The Taliban Islamic militia repulsed an attack on their positions south of the town of Aibak Saturday, a senior Taliban official said.

"The opposition launched an offensive at 7.00 a.m. (0230 GMT). They were beaten back and their dead bodies and burnt vehicles are still on the front line. One Taliban fighter counted more than 50 bodies," Taliban Information Minister Amir Khan Mutaqi told reporters in Pul-i-Khumri.

He said the front line was some 50 kilometres north of the town of Pul-i-Khumri, just south of Aibak, capital of Samangan province.

Opposition forces were shelling Taliban positions behind the front line when journalists visited the area on Saturday morning. It was not possible to reach the front line.

Mr. Mutaqi said the Taliban had formed a new front line on the borders of the northwestern provinces of Badghis and Faryab.

"The front line is on the border of Badghis and Faryab provinces. Badghis is entirely in our hands," he said.

The Taliban took four northern provinces last week when one opposition Uzbek commander, General Abdul Malik, apparently defected to them. They were forced to relinquish their gains when their erstwhile ally turned on them.

They were driven out of the city of Mazar-i-Sharif, the opposition capital and the most important town in northern Afghanistan, after fierce street battles Wednesday.

The International Committee of the Red Cross said they had picked up over 100 bodies from the streets of Mazar-i-Sharif.

Mr. Mutaqi said he had no information about the Taliban forces who had been driven out of Mazar-i-Sharif.

Mr. Mutaqi said the strategically vital road from Kabul to northern Afghanistan was open again Saturday

morning after heavy fighting Friday when the opposition took the town of Jabal-Os-Seraj.

The town lies astride the road as it enters the Hindu Kush Mountain range, some 70 kilometres north of Kabul.

"The road is in full control of the Taliban forces. Yesterday the opposition launched a heavy offensive against us in Jabal-Os-Seraj and took the town. When we counter-attacked we retook it and killed many of their fighters," he said.

Mr. Mutaqi said the road was open for traffic Saturday, but although there was traffic moving south of Jabal-Os-Seraj, there was no sign of traffic coming north from Kabul.

Frontline Taliban soldiers said Saturday Afghan opposition forces continue to hold the key town of Jabal-Os-Seraj, contradicting earlier reports it had fallen to the Islamic militia.

A Taliban frontline commander, Mulla Yar Mohammad, told AFP at Jungle

Bagh, only eight kilometres from Jabul Siraj, the Taliban had not retaken the town.

Other Taliban soldiers also said the highway town was still under the control of forces of Commander Masood.

Meanwhile, at least 12 Shiite Muslims have been killed and mutilated in a southeastern district of the Afghan capital Kabul, U.N. sources said Saturday.

They said a crowd gathered Saturday to protest at the killings, which took place Friday afternoon. Shots were fired as Taliban militiamen tried to disperse the protesters, two of whom were reported killed, the sources added.

The sources said the bodies of the murdered ethnic Hazara Shiites had been mutilated, but there was no immediate word on who had killed them or what the motive was.

The Hazara minority in Kabul is concentrated in two areas, the southwestern district of Karte Seh and Taimani in the north.

Final Canada polls show shaky Liberal support

OTTAWA (R) — Prime Minister Jean Chretien, who called an early election last month after riding high in the polls during most of his 3-1/2 years in office, may be having second thoughts as his popularity slides ahead of Monday's vote.

The final polls of the campaign suggested Mr. Chretien's Liberals might slip below their level of support in 1993, and again raised the prospect of a minority government.

"Liberals limping to the finish," read the headline in the Ottawa Citizen Friday, which published a Southern News-CTV poll conducted by Angus Reid showing Liberal support falling to 36 per cent from its 41 per cent in the 1993 election.

"The Liberals' chances of forming a majority government on election night next Monday now stand at 50-50," CTV News said Thursday night.

In Canada's parliamentary system, elections must be held every five years but the prime minister can call them earlier. Mr. Chretien

had the choice of waiting until late 1998 before calling this election.

An Environics poll published by Toronto's Globe and Mail Friday gave the Liberals 39 per cent of the decided vote, to 20 per cent for the Conservatives and 19 per cent for Reform.

The Globe projected that the Liberals could get a majority of 179 of the 301 seats in the House of Commons in Monday's election, but that the numbers did not account for strengths and weaknesses in individual districts.

The Liberals won 177 of the 295 seats in the last Parliament. The secessionist Bloc Quebecois took 54 seats, but looked set to lose many of those and yield its official opposition status to the Western Canada-based Reform Party.

In 1993, Reform — which advocates tax cuts, smaller government and getting tough on crime and on Quebec separatists — took 52 seats with 19 per cent of the vote, exactly its level in the two latest polls.

The Globe pegged Reform at 55 seats, while the Angus Reid poll suggested 50 to 60 seats.

Mr. Chretien pleaded this week for a majority to enable him to stay the course on his economic agenda — more deficit cutting, followed by increased spending and possible tax cuts.

Mr. Chretien went into the election with a lead put variously at 24 to 40 points, but stumbled when reporters asked him to name a single reason for an early election and lost ground as the other four parties attacked him.

Reform's Deborah Grey said: "Now that Mr. Chretien is talking about a minority government...we think the Liberal strategists have decided that they made a king-size mistake here by calling this election now."

The last Reuters-Zogby tracking poll, released Thursday, showed a slight recovery for the Liberals to 41.9 per cent from 39.7 per cent a day earlier, 20 points ahead of the Conservatives. Gallup Canada released a

poll Thursday night giving the Liberals a 19-point lead at 41 per cent and suggesting a Liberal majority.

One of the defining issues, especially in the latter part of the campaign, has been how to handle Quebec separatists.

Reform capitalised on Western discontent with the Quebec separatist issue by running an ad suggesting the country had bad enough of Quebec-born leaders.

Mr. Chretien, Bloc Quebecois leader Gilles Duceppe and Conservative leader Jean Charest are all Francophone Quebecers.

"What we were saying, 'hello, I'm a Canadian, from out here and I have some views to put on the table,'" Reform's Grey told a news conference.

"But as soon I say something like that or offer a view from the rest of Canada, we get slammed down and get called bigots and anti-Quebec. They are simply lies and it does nothing to further the debate."

U.S., allies issue ultimatum to Bosnian leaders

SINTRA, Portugal (R) — The United States and its allies, fearing Bosnia's peace process is in danger of unravelling, ordered the former warring factions Friday to comply with the Dayton Peace Accords or else face sanctions.

In their toughest ultimatum since the accords were signed 18 months ago, they threatened a series of punitive measures, including action against anyone "harbouring" Bosnia's indicted war criminals.

"If there is not compliance," U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright told members of an international peacekeeping council, "it will not be business as usual for politicians and military leaders in Bosnia."

A final communiqué issued after a meeting of the Peace Implementation Council, a body created under Dayton, indicated the allies' patience was wearing thin with Bosnia's feuding multi-ethnic leadership.

The United States, Britain and France, the main contributors to a NATO-led force in Bosnia, fear that unless the peace accords are implemented in full, the

Balkan country could slip back into war after foreign troops leave as scheduled in June 1998.

The international envoy to Bosnia, Carl Bildt, said the allies were resolved that the peace process must move forward and "will not tolerate the resumption of hostilities anytime, anywhere, anywhere."

The Western allies delivered that message face to face in Sintra with the three members of Bosnia's collective presidency — Alija Izetbegovic, a Muslim; Kresimir Zubak, a Croat; and Momcilo Krajisnik, a Serb.

Mrs. Albright began tightening the screws earlier at a private meeting in which she warned the three leaders they would be denied \$100 million in international loans and more than \$1 billion in private donations unless they reached agreement on a national budget.

After a 15-minute session in which Mrs. Albright pressed them to act — and left her own pen for them to use — the presidents signed the deal, a U.S. official said.

"Everyone here wants to help the Bosnians, but the

Bosnians have to help themselves," Mrs. Albright told reporters.

Officials said Bosnia as well as Serbia and Croatia would be under increasing pressure to turn over accused war criminals, a move considered essential to rescuing the troubled peace process.

In their ultimatum, the allies said anyone "cooperating with and condoning" war criminals such as former Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic could face sanctions, including the denial of visas to travel abroad.

They also threatened to cut off economic aid to "those municipalities which continue to tolerate indicted persons working in a public capacity."

"We want them given up for justice," British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook told reporters.

Four years after it was set up by the U.N. Security Council, a war crimes tribunal at the Hague has indicted 75 people, including Mr. Karadzic and his army commander General Ratko Mladic. But only nine people have been sent to the

Hague for prosecution.

Under the Dayton Accords, Bosnia is supposed to be a single state with two separate entities, one for Serbs and the other a Croat-Muslim Federation.

But Bosnia's ethnic factions have resisted integration, many refugees have been prevented from returning home and the inter-ethnic central government has ignored some of the main provisions of the U.S.-brokered treaty.

The allies threatened to take action if such problems persisted. They vowed to withhold aid from local authorities who blocked the return of refugees and to close down any media outlet that promoted inter-ethnic division.

They also said that unless Bosnia appointed ambassadors by August 1 representing the new unified government then all contact with existing foreign missions would be cut off.

"There is no option for partition or secession open to Bosnia," Mr. Cook said. "We will not tolerate a new apartheid on ethnic lines within Europe."



Russian President Boris Yeltsin (left) shakes hands with his Ukrainian counterpart Leonid Kuchma as they exchange documents after signing a friendship treaty, Saturday (Reuters photo)

Russia, Ukraine sign friendship treaty and resolve fleet dispute

KIEV (AFP) — Russian President Boris Yeltsin and his Ukrainian counterpart Leonid Kuchma signed a long-delayed friendship treaty and formally ended a dispute over the Soviet-era Black Sea Fleet here Saturday.

Mr. Yeltsin said that relations with Ukraine, which have been frosty since the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991, were "the top priority" for Russia.

"I am sure that this day will always be in the annals of relations between our two peoples," he said, emphasising that the accord was between two independent countries.

Mr. Kuchma said: "Relations between Russia and Ukraine are essential for stability in Europe."

Since gaining independence Ukraine has sought to boost economic and political links with the West and loosen the ties that have bound it to Russia's destiny for centuries.

The friendship pact and even Mr. Yeltsin's visit had been stalled because of disagreement on the division and basing of the ageing, but strategic Black Sea fleet, based in the Crimean port of Sevastopol.

Under the deal signed on the fleet, Russia will be able to retain the Sevastopol base for 20 years, on a lease of \$100 million a year, which will be taken off Kiev's debt to Moscow.

Under an earlier accord, Russia already controls most of the ships in the

fleet. Mr. Yeltsin ordered Defence Minister Igor Sergeev to raise Russia's naval flag, the blue and white Saint Andrew's Cross, on the Black Sea vessels on June 12, Interfax said.

Mr. Yeltsin meanwhile stressed that Moscow harbours no territorial ambitions in Ukraine, rehousing nationalist and Communist forces who have questioned Kiev's sovereignty in the Crimean peninsula.

"Russia and Ukraine are equal, democratic states," he said. Russia "does not claim any part of this country or its cities," he was quoted as saying by Interfax.

Crimea, previously part of Russia, was handed over within the Soviet Union to Ukraine's jurisdiction in 1954.

The friendship accord, which was still to be put before the two countries' parliaments for ratification, was welcomed by Russian Communist Party leader Gennady Zyuganov.

However, Mr. Zyuganov, who calls for the restoration of the Soviet Union, said that the fleet should not be divided, but should be "common and fulfill a single task."

Kremlin spokesman Sergei Yastzhemsky described the pact as Mr. Yeltsin's "most important foreign policy move in 1997."

Mr. Yeltsin and Mr. Kuchma held an hour of negotiations before signing the pact and laid a wreath at

the tomb of the unknown soldier. The signing came as NATO prepared to announce new members at a summit in July. The Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland are seen as the leading candidates, but Ukraine has also expressed a desire to join the alliance.

Moscow, which had vigorously opposed any expansion of NATO, signed a landmark cooperation treaty with the alliance in Paris Tuesday.

However, Mr. Yeltsin has repeatedly warned that Russia will "reconsider" its relations with NATO if the alliance takes in states which were once part of the Soviet Union, such as Ukraine.

The friendship treaty will bar Russia and Ukraine from forging any alliances with other states detrimental to each other.

The treaty, which will run for 10 years, also says both countries "confirm the indivisibility" of their existing borders, and pledge to "resolve their disputes peacefully," without interfering in each other's internal affairs.

Moscow could, however, invoke the treaty to try to block a Ukrainian bid for membership of NATO.

A clause in the document states: "Both parties pledge not to sign any accords with third countries directed against the other party (...)" neither party will allow its territory to be used to the detriment of the other's security."

Garboesque Sonia Gandhi takes centre stage of Indian politics

NEW DELHI (AFP) — Sonia Gandhi was at the centre stage of Indian politics Saturday with the top brass of the country's oldest party offering to clear the decks for the reclusive widow to take charge.

Sitaram Kesri, the present chief of the Congress (I) who faces a leadership challenge in next month's party elections, late Friday said he would quit the race if the enigmatic Mrs. Gandhi wanted to lead the party.

Mrs. Gandhi is the widow of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, who was assassinated in 1991. Mr. Kesri said he had made her the offer previously, after her husband's death.

"I had made the offer to her in 1991 and even today I am ready to withdraw if she agrees to become the party president in the interest of party unity," he said here.

The Italian-born widow, after repeatedly refusing to enter Indian politics, joined the Congress this month. Since then, many party activists have asked her to take up the top job and refurbish the party's flagging image.

The Congress suffered its worst electoral defeat in 112 years last year and has been dogged by corruption scandals and

infighting. Mr. Kesri, 77, who faced trenchant criticism for nearly bringing down the ruling coalition government, allegedly to fulfil his prime ministerial ambitions, said he was not power-hungry.

"The only motive behind my offer is to make the party stronger," he said.

His main rival Sharad Pawar, a member of the Congress decision-making body, who vowed to defeat Mr. Kesri on June 9 for presidency of the 112-year-old party, also said he would step aside for Sonia.

Mr. Pawar, 56, had asked the party leadership to unanimously choose Sonia Gandhi, whose husband, mother-in-law Indira Gandhi and her father, Jawaharlal Nehru, led the Congress for most of this century.

Mrs. Gandhi is arguably the most powerful foreign-born national on the Indian political scene, despite maintaining a sphinx-like silence. She is courted by top politicians and industrialists and is regularly visited by foreign dignitaries on state visits to India.

Mr. Pawar's aide Abdul Rahman Antulay said late Friday: "I have all along been saying that Sonia Gandhi should give her consent for her unan-

imous election." But a second challenger to Mr. Kesri, former Cabinet Minister Rajesh Pilot indicated he would not easily bow out of the race for presidency, the first elections for the Congress top post in some two decades.

"Let Kesri and Pawar withdraw from the fray first, then Mrs. Gandhi and I will decide between us," he said.

Mr. Pilot and Mr. Pawar had entered the contest saying a younger, and cleaner leadership would revive the party. Mr. Antulay had initially jumped into the fray but later made way for Mr. Pawar.

However, sources close to Sonia Gandhi — or "Madam" as she is universally called — indicated that she would neither take part in the elections nor "support any camp."

Meanwhile, party spokesman Vithal Narahari Gadgil urged the contenders to avoid unnecessary controversy or "bitterness" in their campaigns.

"Unlike parliamentary elections or state elections, these elections are within the party. They are family affairs and every member of the family should observe family norms," he said.

Despite pressure, ASEAN to admit Burma

KUALA LUMPUR (R) — Realising the dream of its founders 30 years ago, the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) said Saturday it would admit its last three members — Burma, Cambodia and Laos — in July.

Shrugging off international pressure to keep Burma beyond the pale, relying on long-term strategic considerations ASEAN chose to bring the three into the fold sooner rather than later.

"It was unanimous. There were no reservations on the part of any ASEAN member," this year's ASEAN chairman, Malaysian Foreign Minister Abdullah Badawi, told reporters.

ASEAN, which comprises Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam, decided last year to admit all three some time this year.

Burma hailed the decision and vowed to work closely with the bloc.

"ASEAN's dream to become a 100 per cent regional organisation will soon become a reality and we all shall harmoniously work together to develop our region with much co-operation, coordination and understanding of each other," a government spokesman said.

Some analysts had thought a political feud in Cambodia, which has prevented its parliament from passing crucial enabling legislation for ASEAN membership, might have provided a "smokescreen" for ASEAN to delay the whole membership issue. But officials in Phnom Penh were delighted.

"Oh good, that's good for Cambodia," Information Minister Ieng Mouly told Reuters upon learning the news.

"Now we'll be part of the region, we can play a role in the region. We can contribute and participate," he said. "I think this means they didn't take into consideration the internal problems," Ieng Mouly added. In a major concession to the new members, ASEAN decided to give them 10 years from 1998 to cut tariffs to zero in compliance with the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA). Mr. Badawi said. Other members have until 2003 to comply, except for Vietnam which has until 2006.

But in a decision that could come as a relief to Western nations, none of the three will be given "a dialogue partner" at the annual meeting in Kuala Lumpur on July 24-25 when they will be formally admitted.

The annual meetings are followed by a series of conferences between individual ASEAN members and key powers such as the United States, Japan, China, Australia and the European Union.

The group, founded in 1967 as an anti-Communist bulwark at the height of the Vietnam War, was under international pressure to defer Burma's admission over its human rights record.

Washington earlier this month imposed economic sanctions on Rangoon. Asked if Saturday's decision was a signal to the West that ASEAN would not tolerate pressure over the membership issue, Mr. Badawi said: "It was not a signal. We signal to nobody. We just made a decision on what is best for ASEAN and the region."

The group insists its policy of "constructive engagement" with Burma's generals would keep that country on the path toward democratic and free-market reforms. ASEAN officials have also privately expressed concern over the strategic need to pull Burma out of China's orbit.



Some 5,400 Rwandan Hutu refugees arrive in Brazzaville, Congo. The refugees were fleeing Laurent Kabila's alliance forces and ended up in the Republic of Congo (Reuters photo)

Kinshasa denies killings, unveils economic plan

KINSHASA (R) — Laurent Kabila's Democratic Republic of Congo denounced charges of massacres of Rwandan refugees and accused some Security Council members of waging "a campaign of intimidation."

Mr. Kabila's cabinet, in a statement read on state radio Saturday, also unveiled its short-term economic priorities, including plans for road and hospital rebuilding, job creation and a national fuel supply pipeline.

But with ministers saying the state coffers are virtually empty, it was not immediately clear where money would be found.

The statement, read by Information Minister Raphael Ghenda after Friday's cabinet meeting, denounced "a campaign of intimidation orchestrated within the U.N. Security Council" and denied it was blocking work of humanitarian agencies.

"These so-called continuing massacres of refugees are defamatory and invented by those who failed to prevent the fall of the dictatorial regime in our country," Mr. Ghenda said.

Mr. Kabila, whose forces ousted Mobutu Sese Seko on May 17 after a seven-month civil war, took office as president Thursday under interim arrangements giving him sweeping powers. He promised national elections for April 1999.

The U.N. Security Council Thursday urged an immediate end to violence against Hutu exiles in Mr. Kabila's Congo. It called "in the strongest terms for complete cooperation with the U.N. mission investigating reports of massacres, other atrocities and violations of international law in the country."

Thousands of Rwandan Hutu refugees have crossed to neighbouring Congo Brazzaville. The U.N. refugee agency has flown home tens of thousands more in an airlift initiated after reports of massacres and ill-treatment by Mr. Kabila's soldiers.

Investigators have been refused access to suspected mass graves by Kabila's army.

The refugees are remnants of more than one million Hutus who fled Rwanda in 1994 to escape reprisals for the genocide of an estimated 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus.

On the economic front, Mr. Ghenda listed "extremely urgent, short-term priorities" for Africa's third largest country.

"The cabinet has agreed to the construction of a pipeline to supply oil to all regions of the country," he said, after outlining plans to rebuild roads and revive public transport.

Mr. Kabila and his team have stressed transport as a priority for the sprawling country, whose mineral and farming wealth remained underdeveloped during three decades of corrupt and chaotic Mobutu rule for lack of proper infrastructure.

Mr. Kabila and his finance minister had already announced plans to replace the new Zaire currency with a new Congolese franc.

Mr. Ghenda said this would take place in a "relatively short period of time."

Ministers have singled out agriculture as another priority in the nation of over 40 million people, where unemployment may be as high as 70 per cent, civil servants have been unpaid for months and many people scratch a living in the informal sector.

The government promised agricultural training centres and a computerised register of job seekers.

It also promised refurbished and new hospitals, social centres for victims of the war and talks with university student and teaching staff representatives. It said secondary school exams would go ahead as scheduled.

On the security front, Mr. Ghenda said steps had been taken to end "criminal acts of sabotage to destabilise the government and prevent it working." He did not elaborate.

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Sierra Leone coup leaders in talks to avert attack

FREETOWN (R) — Sierra Leone's coup leaders have said negotiations are under way in a bid to avert a possible attack by a Nigerian-led regional force to restore the ousted civilian government.

The Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) tried to reassure Sierra Leoneans late Friday night there was no cause for alarm despite a statement by a veteran politician that Nigerian troops planned a military strike Saturday.

Nigeria has been flying in jeeps, armoured personnel carriers and troops to join its forces already based in Sierra Leone under a regional peacekeeping arrangement. There were signs that Ghana and Guinea would join in.

"The AFRC wishes the public to know that while it is aware of a possible threat to public security, negotiations are continuing within (the country)," said a statement broadcast by state radio.

"The public therefore have no reason to be unduly alarmed," it added.

Last Sunday's violent coup by junior officers led by Major Johnny Paul Koroma has provoked international condemnation and there have been mounting calls for the restoration of

deposed civilian President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, who fled to neighbouring Guinea.

Tensions rose sharply in Freetown after leading politician John Karefa-Smart said on BBC Africa service radio that Nigerian troops would attack Saturday following this week's evacuation of Americans and other Westerners from the capital.

Instructions have been given emanating from Nigeria that an invasion is to take place tomorrow morning," said Mr. Karefa-Smart, who lost the March 1996 presidential election to Mr. Kabbah.

Nigeria leads the West African ECOMOG regional peacekeeping force which was sent to Liberia in 1990. Some ECOMOG troops, including Nigerians, have been based in Sierra Leone.

Diplomats said the coup leaders' announcement Thursday that they were closing Sierra Leone's borders and banning all flights was mainly aimed at stopping the Nigerian buildup.

Military and diplomatic sources said leaders of the rebel Revolutionary United Front (RUF), who had been waging a guerrilla campaign since 1991 but were now allied to the coup soldiers, entered the capital this week.

Underlining the growing confusion in Sierra Leone since Sunday's coup, state radio has carried a series of bellicose statements from RUF rebels who have apparently hijacked the takeover.

"We are advising the Nigerians and all foreign forces to stop bringing war materials to threaten the peace for our people," said a statement by RUF official James Coleman.

A separate statement signed by RUF spokesman David Collins said the rebel group had brought 5,000 fighting men from its five-year bush war against the army to support the "revolution."

It called for the immediate release of RUF leader Foday Sankoh, who has been prevented from leaving his hotel in Nigeria for some time.

The military and diplomatic sources said RUF commanders were rejecting any mediation to try to reverse the overthrow of the elected government.

Nigerian authorities have cut off communications with Mr. Sankoh, who appealed Wednesday from the Abuja Hotel where he is held for his men to join forces with the coup leaders.

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In London, nearly 400 Westerners arrived Friday after being evacuated. Some spoke of fearing death after Sunday's coup as soldiers ran through gates and then looted their houses.

Washington, which is suspending the operation of its embassy in Freetown, said it opposed any use of force to bring back the civilian government.

"There is no need. We would oppose any further violence," said U.S. State Department spokesman John Dinger.

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Jordan Times advertising department.

Netanyahu's enterprise pays off in jolts!

THE ECONOMIC factor may yet succeed where political considerations have failed in convincing the Likud-led government in Israel to heed common sense and breathe new life in the stalled peace process. The Israeli business community is up in arms against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for playing havoc with their economy which did well under the promise of peace. Now, there is a consensus among Israeli industrialists and the business community generally that the economy is grinding to a halt under the strains of Netanyahu's policies at the expense of the overall interest of the country.

The immediate result of the impasse in the peace process and the tense atmosphere that this has created is the dramatic decline in foreign investment and sudden halt in that country's economic integration into the region. Benny Gaon, the chief of Koor, Israel's largest industrial group, has summed up well the dire situation in the Jewish state in the wake of the election of the right when he said that "the economy pays for the damage done by each Har Homa." Gaon is so desperate that he has decided to move half of his group's operations to North and South America so that it will no longer be subject to "Middle Eastern political jolts."

The Israeli business community indeed has a good cause to be alarmed. Recent economic indicators show clear signs of weakness across the board with gross national product dropping by half in the first quarter of 1997. Unemployment has also gone up by 7.5 per cent in the first quarter of this year compared with 6.6 per cent during the same period in 1996. The government has also failed to bring down the inflation rate below 10 per cent. Multinational corporations have started to shun Israel as a regional base and have frozen their plans to settle there. In addition, the construction sector suffered dearly registering a rapid decline by 20 per cent since the May elections of 1996. Observers forecast that the greatest pains have yet to come for Israelis.

All of these economic problems could have been easily avoided had Netanyahu decided to give peace a real chance. Instead of land-for-peace, the current government has opted for policies that are not only unpopular with world governments but also with the international and regional business community. The hall is squarely in Netanyahu's court and it is up to him to spare his people and the Arabs additional agonies and setbacks. If Israel does not rectify the current situation, and soon, the Israeli people would be the first to pay the price, first in economic prosperity and more substantively later in terms of political instability, violence and possibly new conflicts and wars.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

THE JORDAN Press Association board represents the Jordanian journalists but it does not represent the Jordanian public opinion as a whole and therefore this board's consent to government amendments to the law on press and publications does not reflect the opinion of the various sectors of the public, said Fakhri Kassar, a writer for Al Ra'i daily, Saturday. It is because this law is very sensitive and affects various sectors in Jordanian society that the other professional associations came out in support of the press association's protests and backed moves to force the government to cancel the recently introduced amendments that tend to restrict freedoms, said the writer. Amendments to a law which is considered very sensitive and touching on basic freedoms for all citizens should not come upon the consent of one association only; rather, they should win the backing of other associations and sectors, something that can be guaranteed through the legislative authority, he pointed out. The writer said that the various sectors and the professional associations backed the journalists and their board in their protest against the government's amendments because they felt directly affected by these amendments and because they believe that the government should not take such a measure on its own, in the absence of parliament. He demanded that the press association organise a general and comprehensive dialogue over this issue, grouping various sectors with the purpose of reaching agreement on a common and acceptable ground.

A WRITER for Al Doustour demanded that the government seriously and promptly look into the prospect of increasing the amount of pension it is paying ex-servicemen and retired government employees. Twenty years ago, when these retired people received JD 100 or JD 150 as monthly pension, they were satisfied as they were able to cover their immediate needs, but now, with the prices skyrocketing and the costs of living rising continually, they can by no means make both ends meet, said Rakan Majali. The pension paid to the retired military and civilian personnel who are no more eligible for any work places them at the poverty line level and the government ought to include them in the recently declared plan of a social security net that would ensure that they lead a decent life after they had offered valuable service to their nation, he said. Over the past five years, successive governments in Jordan have conducted studies on ways to help the retired people not only through increasing their pension but also through enabling them to take up employment that would improve their income, he

Sunday's Economic Pulse

Even if Jordanian-Israeli trade picks up, it will be 'immaterial'

IT WAS expected that extensive exchange of trade between Jordan and Israel will take place immediately after the signing of the peace treaty by the two states. Pure economic factors were encouragingly pointing to such an exchange because of the geographical proximity and the fact that the Israeli and the Jordanian economies are not similar. That is not the case of most Arab countries, whose economy, in the case of non-oil producing countries, is almost identical. By contrast, the economic and structural differences between Jordan and Israel signify that there are comparative advantages here and there due to variation in technology, wages, capital and other circumstances, making trade useful to both sides.

Jordan enjoys special edge in the production of vegetables, fruit, meat and chemicals, while Israel is superior in agricultural material, machinery and equipment.

But all these factors lead to was an actual trade volume, between Jordan and Israel, rising a little bit above zero. The published statistics, of non-Jordanian origin, claim

that Jordanian exports to Israel in 1996 were no more than \$5.7 million, made up of food items, chemicals and raw materials. Jordan's imports from Israel reached \$12.25 million, mostly plants, machinery, agricultural products and raw materials.

Those on our side who were fearing the risks of economic normalisation with Israel were warning against the impending flood of commodities from Israel which would dominate Jordanian markets in no time, overwhelm domestic industries and use Jordan as a bridge to penetrate Arab markets. All these fears proved to be baseless.

The extremely low level of trade between Jordan and Israel is not due to the politically motivated anti-normalisation pleas which we hear. Most likely, the end consumer in Jordan or in Israel will not recognise the origin of the commodity he/she buys. The real reason is the restrictions placed by the Israeli authorities to satisfy their security phobia. Jordanian lorries are not allowed to cross the Israeli borders. They have to unload and the Israeli lorries

pick up the load. Some commodities are destroyed in the process, others reached their destination, but at a prohibitive cost. In either case, the Jordanian exporter got the message and discontinued his attempts to sell in Israel.

Recently, the Jordanian and Israeli ministers of trade and industry agreed to replace the back-to-back transport system with a door-to-door service. The Israelis approved some 40 Jordanian trucks with their drivers. It remains to be seen whether the application of the new system will run smoothly, without new Israeli hurdles.

Some optimistic analysts believe that trade between Jordan and Israel will pick up this year, to reach some \$50 million worth of products in each direction. They base their estimate on the fact that the trade agreement was signed only in mid-1996 and the transport arrangement was reached only towards the end of the year. However, even if such optimistic estimates were actually realised, the Israeli share of Jordan's foreign trade will remain below 2 per cent, which is immaterial.

Europe after Chirac's gamble — not promising

By Gwynne Dyer

JUST ENOUGH people voted for Jacques Chirac to make him president of France two years ago, but hardly anybody actually likes him. He is one of those people with such a single-minded ambition to climb to the top of the heap that eventually their compatriots just let them. But that explains why almost everybody is now delighted to see Chirac fall in such a spectacular fashion.

Chirac inherited a parliament where his own centre-right coalition enjoyed a huge majority: 497 out of 577 seats. He called this election almost a year before he had to. As a result, he may spend the next five years of his seven-year presidential term "cohabiting" with a left-wing prime minister and parliament.

There is still a chance that Chirac's allies could squeak in with a razor-thin majority in the second round of voting on June 1. We did not get the word "bourgeoisie" from the French by accident, and a lot of disillusioned conservative voters who abstained from the first round of voting on May 24 may turn out this Sunday now that the left is so close to winning.

That may save Chirac from "cohabitation" — but such a result virtually guarantees that a large part of the French population will soon take to the streets. Either way, the project for European economic and monetary union (EMU) is now in deep trouble.

So why are people so pleased to see Chirac get his comeuppance? Why do normally sensible analysts claim that Chirac blundered in calling early elections, when the centre-right's prospects would obviously have been

even worse in an election next year? The concept of "schadenfreude" leaps to mind.

"Schadenfreude" is a German word meaning joy in the misery of another, even if you do not benefit from it yourself. (Interesting which words the English language borrows from which languages, isn't it?) The sheer, selfless joy so many people feel at Chirac's humiliation is hiding them to the real reason he had to take his gamble.

The deadline for countries to meet the "Maastricht criteria" and join the first wave of European Union members adopting a single currency in 1999 looms ever closer. To qualify, France must cut its budget deficit from 4.2 per cent to a mere 3 per cent by the end of this year. It would be an unthinkable blow to French pride to be left out, but Chirac wasn't sure that he could bring the country, or even his own parliamentary supporters, with him.

Like the last Conservative government in Britain, the centre-right governing coalition in France contains many "Euro-sceptic" politicians who mistrust the grand plan for an economically unified Europe. They see it as the pet project of German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, and they do not believe it is politically feasible to make the spending cuts that would be needed for France to qualify.

Chirac's calculation was that if his coalition could win an early election, then the centre-right's members of parliament with five more years of guaranteed employment ahead of them could be cajoled into voting for the cuts. Otherwise, facing parliamentary elections next year, they would refuse the jump — or, if they did make the

cuts, then the left would win next year and revoke them.

Chirac was seduced by polls that as recently as two months ago were predicting a comfortable centre-right victory in a premature election this spring. But it was not a capricious gamble; moving the vote up a year was his best chance of escaping a truly dreadful dilemma next year. It just turned out to be too late already.

This means trouble in France, and trouble in Europe. No matter how the second round of voting comes out on Sunday, it has suddenly become clear that France is unlikely to meet the criteria for joining the single currency in 1999. Even a narrow centre-right victory will confer no mandate to make the needed cuts, and any attempt to push them through will push the French into the streets.

And without France, EMU just isn't going to happen. At least, not on schedule and according to plan. Is this a bad thing?

Many on the left would argue that it is not. They support European unity, but not a plan for getting there that draws so heavily on night-wing economic thinking. There must, they say, be another way of doing it that is not so hard on the workers. (Unemployment in France is already over 12 per cent, and meeting the "Maastricht criteria" would almost certainly send it even higher).

In theory, this may be true. In practice, Chancellor Kohl is probably the last German politician in this generation who can deliver his country into a real European Union — and he can only do that if he can reassure Germans that they are not giving up the rock-solid deutschmark for a less trustworthy "euro".

Without Germany, there is no possibility of a unified European economy. Without that, there is little chance that the European Union will ever develop the strength and confidence not only to treat Russia as a normal country, but to take the risk, when the Russian economy has fully recovered in ten or fifteen years, of admitting this economic giant into the European Union.

The long-term alternative is not apocalyptic, but it is probably a less stable, less open, less prosperous Europe. And the short-term outlook in France is distinctly unappealing.

If the left wins control of parliament, then France faces five years of semi-paralysis as a Socialist-led government wrestles with a right-wing president. And if the centre-right pulls off a narrow victory, it may get very rough indeed.

The last time that happened was in 1967, when the French bourgeoisie turned out in full force in the second round to steal what looked like a victory for the left at the end of the first round. That was promptly followed by the violent upheavals of May 1968, the closest thing to a full-scale revolution that France had seen in a hundred years.

Daniel Cohn-Bendit, leader of the '68 upheavals in Paris, is now a member of the European Parliament for the German Green Party, but he still holds dual German-French citizenship, and he sees it all coming round again. "The worst thing that can happen is for Europe to be built in the way Chirac and Kohl have decided," he said recently. "We are going to have a third or fourth round in the streets of France this autumn."

LETTERS

Court keeping our honour?

To the Editor:

THE OLD familiar story: a young man kills his sister to "cleanse his family's honour." While I am only a layman, and not qualified to pass judgement on the criminal court system here, it does appear to me that there are some very disturbing trends in Jordanian society that the criminal court system, by its decisions, is only perpetuating.

This whole business of "honour killing" is obviously lopsided in favour of the men in this society. The blame for "polluting" the family is always on the woman, although anyone knows that sexual misconduct involves two parties. A man, it seems, can be involved in promiscuous relationships and somehow it does not bring "dishonour" on the family. I believe that throughout history, and in almost every society, men have done much more damage to the family unit than the woman.

While promiscuous acts are certainly to be condemned, whether committed by men or women, in this society it is an obsession that whips up people into fanaticism. Unfortunately, there are many other critical family issues that are swept under the rug and ignored — after all, the family's "honour" is the most critical thing, and "honour" is understood almost completely in the context of the sexual conduct of the woman. The man can be a dictator, a fool and a brute, but never be called to account for it.

The ruling of the criminal court on the latest case I read about was disturbing for another reason: the young man who killed his sister got off with only three months in prison because it was determined that his "crime" was committed in a "fit of fury." Now, most countries do distinguish between premeditated murder and manslaughter — but three months? The message from the court seems to be this: "We understand your position, young man — the worst thing that could happen to your family has happened (tainted honour), and you simply lost control of yourself. It was not really you who killed your sister, but that fury in you that demands justice. So we will give you three months in prison as a sop to the world body that does not understand our pristine system of morality here."

Since your family is not pressing charges (how could they hold their head up in front of their neighbours and relatives if they did), then obviously we are not going to.

The young man goes off to prison for a few months, but the real message that is relayed to the man on the street is: "This person is not really a criminal — he is a hero."

As long as the courts make these kinds of rulings, I expect that we will see only an increase in these "honour" killings in the future.

Maybe some time in the distant future, all these morally pure men will finally root out all the evil, and we will have them to thank for finally giving us a spotless community to live in.

Boh Rohertson,
Amman, 11131.

'Sanctioning' non-cooperation

To the Editor:

WHEN the government in Iraq was draining that country's southern marshes, I called some U.S. environmental organisations to see if anything could be done. I learned that we were helpless to prevent the destruction of an ecosystem and the way of life of the marsh Arabs. One person I spoke to used words I still remember: he called Iraq "a non-cooperative sovereign state."

I wonder how Iraq could become a "cooperative sovereign state." Can the Baath regime of President Saddam Hussein ever cease to dismiss the concerns of others either as threats or as interference? Can there be any mediation from Jordanians, as fellow members of the Arab Nation?

Time will tell, but sanctions do not make the waiting easy.

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The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any issue they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well.

Khatami needs time to prove himself

By Amir Taheri

LONDON — The Iranian presidential election has produced a surprise result that has to be taken into account in any reappraisal of policies towards Tehran. Almost two-thirds of the voters, some 22 million people, chose Mohammad Khatami, a 54-year-old mullah, against another 54-year-old mullah, Ali Akbar Nateq-Nouri.

Some might wonder what the difference can be between one middle-aged mullah and another? The answer: more than you might think. Mr. Khatami campaigned on a platform of social liberalisation, political opening, normalisation of relations with the outside world, including the West, greater rights for women and the rule of law. Those are truly revolutionary themes in an Iran suffocating under a corrupt and oppressive regime with a mediaeval ideology.

Mr. Nateq-Nouri, candidate of the most reactionary factions in the Khomeinist establishment, offered a platform that resembled what the Taliban movement is doing

despite massive cheating in his favour in many provinces. The Iranian people, abandoning their habit of boycotting elections, decided to turn up en masse to prevent the Taleban ideology from winning.

The election was neither free nor fair, in the sense accepted in a pluralist democracy. Mr. Khatami's campaign was severely restricted by the government and some powerful mullahs who treat the provinces as their fiefdoms. The victorious candidate was prevented from even visiting six of the country's 27 provinces during the campaign.

Nevertheless, for the first time there was a genuine contest and a clear choice. And the personality and policies of the winner do matter. Mr. Khatami is an urbane intellectual who has lived in Europe, knows French and German and is familiar with Western literature and political thought.

Mr. Nateq-Nouri comes from a peasant family, has little formal education, has travelled out of Iran only on brief official visits in Russia

one needs to read is the Koran.

Mr. Khatami won because urban middle and working classes wanted to block Mr. Nateq-Nouri. The unexpected voter turnout stymied his well-oiled electoral machine.

It is almost a cliché to say that totalitarian regimes cannot reform until a significant section of their people decides that it is time for change. That is what is happening in Iran.

Mr. Khatami was backed by politicians, technocrats, mullahs and military officers convinced that repression at home and adventure abroad are no longer sustainable.

Could Mr. Khatami become the Iranian Gorbachev? Mikhail Gorbachev seized control of the party and the state when he became general secretary and president. In the Iranian system, the elected president has to share power with an unelected "Supreme Guide" and the faction-ridden parliament.

Nevertheless, Mr. Khatami now has the legitimacy of a clear electoral mandate that neither the "Supreme Guide" nor the parliament can

develops its own unstoppable logic.

Will his election lead to changes in Iran's foreign policy? I believe so. He can start with a clean slate. His name has never been mentioned in connection with terrorism or the mass executions that the regime has carried out over the years. He has made plain that he knows that he cannot deliver an economic upturn without normalising ties with the industrialised world, including the United States.

Before deciding what new measures to take with regard to Iran, the Western powers should give Mr. Khatami a chance to settle in, form his cabinet and unveil his policies. They should not shut the door in his face even before he is sworn in. Then they should demand that his administration do what he promised during his campaign.

If Iran begins to close the chapter of revolution at home, it would be unlikely to want to keep it open abroad.

The writer is an Iranian journalist abroad. The article above is published in the

Faces of resistance — a snapshot of life inside the secret world of Israel's Palestinian prisons

By Robert Fisk

BEIRUT — Some of them are smiling confidently, others stare hopelessly into the camera lens, men like 70-year-old Palestinian Mohammad Ahmad Al Nayerat, sentenced to life imprisonment for killing a Jewish settler and burying his body in concrete. He worked for the Popular Front for Liberation of Palestine and has spent 30 years in Israel's prisons. His features seem dead, those of a man who knows he will never leave jail alive.

Some are younger, like 30-year-old Hizbollah member Ali Belhas, sentenced to life for attacking Israel's occupation forces inside southern Lebanon; he has spent just four years in the high security Ashkelon prison in central Israel, fitted out with a false leg to take the place of the one he lost when an Israeli helicopter pilot fired several bullets into his foot as he tried to rescue a wounded fellow guerrilla. He may smile jauntily for his relatives back home in the south Lebanese village of Siddiqin but he is carefully hidden his false left leg from the camera. More than 30 members of his family were slaughtered last year when Israel bombed the United Nations base at Cana, in which they had sought protection.

The inmates' photographs — a rare look into the secret world of Israel's prisons — were sent to families in Jordan and Lebanon, along with letters carried by the International Red Cross. Israel forbids the men to be photographed in their regulation prison uniforms and



Mustapha Hammoud, Hizbollah member serving 25 years in Ashkelon prison, Israel, for attacking Israeli occupation troops in southern Lebanon. Has served nine years of a sentence handed down at military court in Lod

Mohammad Ahmad Al Nayerat, aged 70, serving a life sentence for killing a Jewish settler. Has spent the past 30 years in Ashkelon prison

Yousef Farouk Alladin, a 28-year-old Fatah member, was sentenced to 25 years after his capture during a failed boat attack off southern Lebanon

Ali Belhas, from Siddiqin, southern Lebanon, a Hizbollah member captured during an attack on Israeli occupation troops in southern Lebanon. Sentenced to life imprisonment, he has served four years

Zohair Karam, 26, a Palestinian from a refugee camp in Tripoli, sentenced to life for trying to penetrate the Israeli occupation zone in southern Lebanon, en route to an attack in Israel. He has served six years

Qasem Hassan Sulleman, 26, a Palestinian from Ein Al Helweh camp in Lebanon, sentenced to 20 years for trying to penetrate Israeli occupied zone in southern Lebanon en route to attack in Israel. Has served six years

prison walls must not appear in the snapshots. So the lifers of Ashkelon pose for their relatives in T-shirts and jeans, the walls behind them draped in flower-patterned carpets of sheets, looking for all the world — some of them — like guest workers or young men posing for pre-marriage snapshots. But the only marriage in Ashkelon is the men's allegiance to the militia groups of which they remain members, their "officers" still giving orders to Hizbollah men and members of Fatah and the PFLP within Israel's top security jail.

A few have fallen foul of their own comrades. Qasem Sulleman, a 26-

year-old Palestinian sentenced to 20 years for trying to attack Israel's occupation zone in southern Lebanon, was brutally beaten by Fatah prisoners when his brother — one of Yasser Arafat's Palestine Liberation Organisation officers in the Ein Al Helweh refugee camp in Lebanon — abandoned Mr. Arafat's cause for the Hizbollah's protection. Sulleman has since moved to cells occupied by members of the radical Palestinian Islamic Jihad movement.

Belhas is not the only prisoner with a missing leg. Yousef Farouk Alladin, a 28-year-old Palestinian from Jordan, lost his foot after he was wounded by

another machine-gun-firing Israeli helicopter. Spotted as he tried to sail down the Lebanese coast near the Israeli border, he handed his boat over the U.N. headquarters, taking several troops hostage. One of them died in the ensuing Israeli attack. Alladin was luckier; he lived to be sentenced to 25 years in prison.

Ahmad Sami Ismail of the Lebanese Communist Party has only 12 of his 20-year sentence to endure; he was captured as he tried to kidnap Israeli soldiers from southern Lebanon. Mustapha Hammoud — pictured like a Hizbollah "martyr" with a circle of yellow flowers around his head — has served nine

years of a 25-year sentence for attacking Israeli occupation soldiers.

Nor are all these sentences legal under international law — which permits armed resistance to foreign occupation, a category into which most of the Hizbollah prisoners fall. The men captured in Lebanon were taken across the Israeli border to be sentenced before Israeli military courts, in violation of the Geneva conventions. Even inside their jail, they have gone on hunger strike for improvements in their conditions, including the right to have photographs taken of themselves after Israeli prison guards imposed a five-year ban on snapshots. The pictures of

prisoners from Lebanon are paid for by the Red Cross — Palestinian inmates from the West Bank and Gaza must ask their families to pay — but more than photographs are being sent out of Ashkelon.

Jamal Mahroum, who spent 11 years in Israeli jails — including Ashkelon — for PLO gun-running in the West Bank, now helps to run an ex-prisoners committee in Lebanon. "We've just had a note from one of the men in Ashkelon that two Lebanese prisoners there are being used as spies by the Israelis," he says. "So I'm going to see their families in Lebanon this weekend. I'll tell them that relatives of prisoners are enti-

led to be paid by our organisation and then I'll gently let them know that their sons are working for the Israelis. If I find that the families have been allowed to visit their sons in Israel, we'll know for sure they are spies. But we think that if the parents can be persuaded to tell their sons to stop spying on the other prisoners, then the boys will stop. We can get the parents' message to Ashkelon."

Stool-pigeons — the prisoners call them asfourat (birds) in Arabic — are forgiven by fellow inmates if they publicly repeat in front of their comrades.

Jamal Mahroum has reason to feel strongly about

spies in the ranks. He was captured by Israeli undercover troops in 1983 after being betrayed by a Palestinian near Ramallah. Just a day before — while his car-load of guns was parked a few metres away — he had posed for a snapshot at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem along an unsuspecting British tourist. Today, it has pride of place in his scrapbook, a gun-runner who does not even know the name of the woman standing beside him — who in turn has no idea that the man next to her, in this most holy of Jewish places, is moving weapons for the PLO.

The Independent

Experts: Government attempts at computer surveillance are risky, costly

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — The U.S. government wants to ensure that law enforcement officials have electronic "keys" giving them access to every computer in the country. But that may be technologically impossible and could add billions of dollars to the cost of computer systems, experts say.

In response, the government said the computer experts have set up an easily-knocked down straw man, because their report considers only the worst of worst cases.

The report, issued last week by a team of scientists and researchers in the field of computer security, looks at a type of computer security known as key escrow.

It is based on computer encryption programmes that use mathematical procedures to scramble data so that it is difficult or impossible for anyone but an intended recipient to decode

and read. In key escrow, each coded message comes with a key that can unlock it. Because governments worldwide are concerned about the ability of criminals to use computers to hide information, some of them want copies of those keys.

In the opinion of the experts, it will not work. First, they say, it injects an element of risk into a system which is supposed to foster confidence by creating an outside party with access to supposedly secure information.

Any key recovery system would create centralised databases holding thousands and even millions of keys — high-value targets more likely to be worth the cost and risk of hacker attacks than anything now existing.

It is mind-boggling to imagine the scale of the repositories that would need

to be created," said Hal Abelson of Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), one of the report's authors.

Second, a fully functioning key recovery infrastructure is an extraordinarily complex system, which only adds to the possibility of catastrophic failure.

From a purely technical standpoint, the scientists say, universal key escrow would be almost bound to fail. Every programme has a bug or two. Large complex programmes, which this level of key escrow would require, would surely contain several. Each of those flaws makes the system vulnerable to breakdown or attack — the computer equivalent of handing out keys and maps to every house in America.

And finally, the report concludes, the costs of the extensive system desired by the government have been

neither described nor demonstrated, but are likely to be very high.

What extensive system is that, wondered William Reinsch of the Bureau of Export Administration in the Department of Commerce, the agency that regulates the export of programmes using strong cryptography.

The researchers appear to be envisioning a single, key management system for the entire world geared to meeting all law enforcement's needs.

"They have imagined a system that is not the one we intend to create, and having imagined it, they then proceed to knock it down," Mr. Reinsch said.

Rather than one centralised system, the government expects private businesses to build their own key escrow databases.

Say, for example, the Bank of America decided to

promote electronic banking. It would need strong encryption to make it safe for customers to use the system.

"But you'd probably want key recovery in case your customers lose their key," Mr. Reinsch said.

It's those smaller, decentralised systems that law enforcement would use, rather than setting up one massive, central system, he said.

Other critics point out that the groups and companies involved in putting the report together have an economic stake in getting the government to give up on its efforts to promote key escrow systems.

U.S.-based companies are currently restricted by law from exporting programmes containing strong encryption, which locks them out of an increasingly important international market.

49th volume of United Nations Yearbook published

NEW YORK (U.N.) — The forty-ninth volume of the Yearbook of the United Nations has just been published and released by the Department of Public Information (DPI). The 1,615-page reference book covers all major activities in 1995 of the United Nations and its family of organisations.

A unique feature of the current volume is a special section on the observance of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, including illustrated accounts of the ceremonies in San Francisco and New York, as well as excerpts from 200 speeches delivered by world leaders at commemorative plenary meetings of the General Assembly in October 1995. The cover of the edition features an historic photo of dignitaries assembled for the October commemorative session.

The Yearbook, as the primary comprehensive and authoritative reference work on the United Nations, is widely used by diplomats, government officials, scholars, journalists and others with a serious interest in international and United Nations affairs. It is fully indexed and reproduces in their entirety the texts of all major General Assembly, Security Council and Economic and Social Council resolutions.

The 1995 Yearbook consists of 54 chapters, divided into seven parts: political and security issues; regional and peace-keeping issues; human rights; economic and social issues; legal issues; institutional, administrative and budgetary issues; and inter-governmental organisations related to the United Nations. It provides a detailed overview of some

20 peacekeeping operations undertaken by the organisation during 1995, as well as of its consistent efforts to promote and protect human rights worldwide.

A major chapter of the new edition addresses the situation in the former Yugoslavia, detailing the signing of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as developments regarding United Nations peacekeeping operations in the region. Also covered in the 1995 edition is the complex peace process in the Middle East. United Nations activities to assist strife-torn countries in Africa, the work of the new international tribunals to prosecute war crimes in the former Yugoslavia and in Rwanda, and the ongoing search for peace and justice in a wide-range of countries and regions.

The United Nations' efforts to reduce and eliminate armaments around the world are highlighted in the chapter on disarmament. It covers the indefinite extension of the 1968 Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the approval of the Pelindaba Treaty — which made the entire African continent a nuclear-weapon-free zone — and continued progress towards a comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty.

The 1995 Yearbook also covers diverse topics relating to economic and social development. It provides an overview of three major global conferences held during the year: the World Summit for Social Development, in Copenhagen; the Fourth World Conference on Women, in Beijing; and the Ninth United

Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, in Cairo. It records international action to combat drug abuse and trafficking and notes the progress made towards implementing a United Nations-sponsored global programme on HIV/AIDS.

In the field of the environment, the Yearbook provides information on United Nations agreements relating to climate change and biological diversity, forged to ensure a stronger commitment to global environmental protection. It also covers two formal texts adopted in 1995 to strengthen the international legal order for the world's oceans. Those texts concerned the management of highly migratory fish stocks and the exploration and exploitation of sea-bed resources.

The Yearbook also describes United Nations humanitarian and emergency assistance to the many countries affected by complex regional emergencies and disasters during the year. In 1995, some 24 million persons were aided by the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other international agencies. The plight of millions of Africans, particularly in the Great Lakes region, was a special concern.

In its institutional, administrative and budgetary section, the Yearbook recounts measures taken to deal with the financial crisis of the United Nations. It also chronicles continuing reform efforts aimed at improving the organisation's ability to meet the demands of the post-cold-war era and the challenges of the future.

Denmark completes return of ancient Iceland sagas

COPENHAGEN (R) — Fifty years after a bitter dispute broke out between Denmark and Iceland over the ownership of manuscripts of the Icelandic sagas, Denmark has returned the last of the historic documents to its former colony.

A Danish naval vessel carrying 300 priceless documents, the last of some 1,400 early Icelandic manuscripts to be sent back to their homeland, arrived in the Icelandic capital Reykjavik early this month.

It was a dignified end to a row that echoed the passions of the original sagas, and found parallels with the argument between Greece and Britain over the Elgin marbles, friezes from the Parthenon in Athens that now reside in the British Museum.

The sagas, tales of the

exploits of old Norse heroes and their families, including Erik the Red's discovery of North America, were first written down in mediaeval times, and Icelanders see them as a vital part of their cultural heritage.

"The return of the documents — in its time a highly political question — has ended completely undramatically," Britta Ohrik Frederiksen, deputy director of Copenhagen University's Arnarnagana Institute, told Reuters.

"The process has taken 25 years. It has been completed more or less on schedule, giving us ample time to restore and photograph the documents and return them gradually and without interference," she said.

Iceland, a Danish colony since 1381, declared its independence from Den-

mark in 1944 after being occupied by the British during World War II.

Two years later, it demanded that Denmark return the manuscripts of the sagas, arguing that they were a kind of birth certificate for the young republic.

Iceland's action led to protests by Danish academics, demonstrations by students and appeals to the supreme court.

It was not until 1965 that the Danish parliament passed legislation allowing the manuscripts to be returned, and the shipment of the documents did not begin until 1973.

Each batch of manuscripts was meticulously processed, restored and micro-filmed by Copenhagen University experts before being sent back in regular consignments.

The first shipment included such works as the Codex Regius, a collection of mythological poems written down in the 13th century, and the Flateyjarbok, prose sagas of the ancient Norwegian kings.

The documents — in all some 2,800 manuscripts — had been owned by Copenhagen University since 1730, when the Icelandic scholar Arnri Magnusson died, leaving it the ancient manuscripts he had spent his life collecting.

The sagas include Nordic myths written in old Norse. They recount the first settlement of Iceland by the Vikings in the ninth century A.D. and gory Icelandic family feuds of a thousand years ago.

Among them is the saga of Erik the Red, founder of Greenland and discoverer of

Vinland on the North American continent. They were written down by unknown scribes over a period of 600 years from the 12th to 18th centuries.

Under the terms of the agreement, a 14th century copy of the Njals saga — the mightiest of the Icelandic prose sagas, describing a blood feud spanning 50 years — has been retained by Copenhagen.

Copenhagen is keeping some 1,400 items, about half of Magnusson's original collection, consisting mainly of manuscripts covering Danish and Norwegian history, such as ancient laws and legal documents.

An official ceremony and symposium at Reykjavik University in June, involving Danish and Icelandic academics, will mark the end of the saga of the sagas.

Bahraini exhibition to open Monday in bid to reactivate free trade accord with Jordan

By Ghalia Alul
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Aiming to enhance Jordanian-Bahraini economic relations and increase trade between both countries, a Bahraini trade exhibition will open in the Kingdom on June 2-6.

Bahraini Ambassador to Jordan Mohammad Ben Saif Jaber Musalam told a press conference on Saturday that the exhibition will be the first of its kind in Jordan in a bid to reactivate the free trade agreement both countries signed in

1995. "The agreement will be ink on paper if it's not reactivated," said Mr. Musalam, who stressed the need to improve the balance of trade between his country and Jordan.

Around 50 Bahraini industrial companies will display their products at the exhibition which, Mr. Musalam said, is expected to result in joint Jordanian-Bahraini projects.

The ambassador noted that Jordan and Bahrain are strategically located in their respective

regions, a factor, he said, which will help them to enjoy mutual trade benefits.

"The geographic location is the base for both countries. Bahrain is the gateway for the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries," Mr. Musalam said pointing to the benefits that Jordan can reap through the agreement, in reaching the GCC markets.

Mr. Musalam said Bahrain has established a \$2 billion free industrial area on its Persian Gulf port.

The area, he added, is

due to be operative next year. On the sidelines of the exhibition, Mr. Musalam said, a Bahraini trade delegation will visit Jordan to try to establish joint ventures as part of the efforts to enhance trade relations between the two countries.

The Amman Chamber of Industry will also hold a joint seminar to discuss Jordanian-Bahraini trade relations as well as potential investments and joint projects.

Major political party readies detailed, comprehensive plan for reforms

By Francesca Ciriaci
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The National Constitutional Party (NCP) will soon announce a plan to "revitalize" Jordan's economy through encouraging the key-sectors of trade and tourism, a party source said.

The new centrist party, officially announced early May from the merger of one large and eight smaller parties, will also indicate "the practical steps to be taken to implement the plan," the source added.

The document is "almost ready" and awaits the NCP's executive council's decision to be officially released.

It would be the first time in Jordan's recent democratic history that a major political party proposes a comprehensive and detailed plan for economic reforms.

According to Anis Muasher, the NCP deputy secretary general for economic and financial affairs, the plan will recommend substituting customs' duties with value added tax (VAT) and the launching of public awareness campaigns as the main mea-

sures to boost trade and convince Jordanians not to shun jobs that traditionally go to foreign labourers.

"So many foreign business delegations are visiting the country seeking investment opportunities, but very little is happening," Mr. Muasher said, "and the main reason is that we still have to do more to complete our homework."

A former minister of finance and a prominent businessman, Mr. Muasher, asserted that the introduction of the VAT, a fixed percentage on the selling price to be paid to the government regardless of the price the importer paid for the goods, "would eliminate at least 50 per cent of obstacles [to trade] and bureaucracy altogether."

Recently, the government has been discussing a sharp reduction in customs duties on industrial inputs and considering the introduction of the VAT to generate substitute revenues for the treasury.

Deputy Prime Minister Jawad Anani and Minister of Industry, Trade and Supply Hani Mulki met last week with Customs Department Direc-

tor General Nazmi Abdullah and discussed the issue, but no decision has been taken so far.

"We are not giving enough attention to trade, and encouraging trade means dealing with the customs duties issue," Mr. Muasher stressed.

Together with trade, the tourism sector should also be a priority in the government's agenda, as "it generates very quick income, and often in foreign currencies."

The economic plan to be launched by the NCP will also focus on ways and means to fight unemployment.

According to Mr. Muasher, the issue of unemployment should be addressed through a double strategy: "On one hand, creating new job opportunities and, on the other hand, replacing foreign workers with local labour force."

Job opportunities could be created by encouraging foreign and domestic investment, he suggested.

Regarding the presence of a large number of foreign workers in the Kingdom, "we have to study carefully why Jordanians are not taking the jobs which foreigners are performing," Mr. Muasher said.

According to official statistics, there are around 400,000 foreign labourers in the Kingdom, working mainly as farmers and waiters, as

well as in constructions.

The "social and traditional factor" behind such phenomenon "can be easily overcome by proper public awareness programmes," Mr. Muasher said, citing as an example a TV campaign launched some thirty years ago by current Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali and persuaded Jordanian girls at that time to undertake the nursing profession.

"Dr. Majali's daughter was the first Jordanian girl to apply for nursing school, and, two weeks only after the campaign started, the number of applicants was higher than the posts available," Mr. Muasher recalled.

"We need to convince Jordanians that jobs in tourism or farming are not humiliating," he emphasised.

"The second strategy is to improve working conditions: A farmer in the Jordan Valley needs a good home for a shelter, fresh water to drink and proper equipment."

Through adequately studied public awareness campaigns and improved working conditions, Jordanians would be ready to take the jobs now reserved to foreigners, he said.

"I do not believe in preventing foreign workers from taking such jobs when there is no alternative," Mr. Muasher concluded.

REUTERS

REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	YEN	FRF
US Dollar	1.0000	1.7553	0.6096	1.4138	118.31	1.3758	1688.82	1.9184	5.7581
DE Mark	0.5684	1.0000	0.5371	0.2256	68.19	0.8064	990.52	1.1250	3.3759
GB Sterling	1.6403	2.7980	1.0000	0.2346	190.85	2.2567	2771.81	3.1468	6.4450
CH Franc	0.7673	1.2953	0.4306	1.0000	82.23	0.9724	1194.38	135.92	4.0690
JP Yen	0.0086	1.4655	0.5236	1.2150	1.0000	1.1824	14.52	164.87	4.9485
CA Dollar	0.7298	1.2327	0.4447	1.0282	1.10	1.0000	1214.82	1.3862	4.1603
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0090	0.3605	0.8837	1454.76	0.8140	1.00	11.35	3.4070
NL Guilder	0.5213	0.8835	0.3174	0.7389	60.58	0.7168	880.39	1.00	2.9999
FR Franc	0.1737	0.2961	0.1058	0.2450	20.18	0.2389	33.31	33.3100	1.00

Middle Eastern Currencies									
Currency	USD	JOD	SAR	BAH	QAT	KUW	AED	LB	EGP
US Dollar	1.0000	0.7080	3.7503	0.3770	3.6398	3.6728	3.6728	1537.00	3.3805
Jordan Dinar	1.4124	1.0000	0.2970	0.5325	0.5140	0.4270	0.5176	2170.90	4.7074
GB Sterling	0.5684	0.1888	0.1005	0.97	0.9066	0.98	0.98	409.83	0.9030
Bahrain Dinar	2.66	1.8780	9.8477	1.0000	9.85	9.85	9.74	4078.62	0.9906
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.1945	1.0304	1.0304	1.0000	1.01	1.01	422.20	0.9312
Kuwait Dinar	3.3080	2.3420	12.4059	1.2471	12.04	12.15	12.15	5084.38	0.9312
Emirates Dinar	0.2723	0.1928	1.0211	1.0206	0.9910	0.9823	1.00	418.48	0.9229
Lebanese/1000	0.85	0.4806	2.4400	0.2463	2.3881	0.1967	2.3896	1.00	2.2052
Egyptian	0.2950	0.2000	1.1065	0.1112	1.0730	0.0882	1.0836	453.47	1.00

Energy									
Oil	Lat	Wet	Wet	Wet	Wet	Wet	Wet	Wet	Wet
Brent	19.85	10.85							
W. Tena	20.95	21.10							
Bonny	19.85	10.85							
Dubai	19.10	10.05							
Utl Gas	205.00	203.00							

Mid-East Currencies									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY				
SA Riyal	0.2666	0.4549	0.16256	0.37724	31.027				
AE Dirham	0.2723	0.46449	0.16599	0.38521	31.017				
KW Dinar	3.3080	5.84334	2.01654	4.67948	384.911				
BH Dinar	0.3770	4.52480	1.61708	3.75235	306.642				
CY Pound	1.9597	3.3368	1.1922	2.7654	227.584				

Metal Prices									
Metal	Lat	Wet	Wet	Wet	Wet	Wet	Wet	Wet	Wet
Gold (oz)	344.7	345.2							
Silver (oz)	4.7	4.72							
Platinum (oz)	401.5	405.5							
AL (3 Months)	1015	1010							
CU (3 Months)	2530	2534							
Zinc (3 Months)	1337	1340							
Lead (3 Months)	632	633							
NI (3 Months)	7190	7210							

Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)									
Currency	Month	3 Months	6 Months	9 Months	1 Year				
USD	5.56	5.88	5.87	6.00	6.12				
GBP	6.37	6.53	6.71	6.80	7.03				
JPY	0.48	0.50	0.56	0.75	0.75				
DEM	3.06	3.10	3.16	3.22	3.28				
FRF	3.10	3.49	3.54	3.56	3.50				
CHF	0.75	0.87	1.06	1.25	1.10				
ITL	6.88	6.83	6.81	6.73	6.60				

Main Equity Indices									
Source	Index	Value	Change	% Change	High	Low	Pr Clr		
New York	DOW JONES	7331.04	0.86	0.01	7371.30	7241.76	7330.10		
New York	S&P 500	848.28	4.2	0.5	851.87	831.87	844.08		
London	FT-SE 100	4821.3	-1	-0.09	4834.2	4585.0	4872.3		
Tokyo	NIKKEI 225	20668.81	-243.42	-1.2	20390.4	20029.1	20312.2		
Paris	CAC 40	2583.94	4.7	0.10	2585.35	2536.08	2570.24		
Frankfurt	DAX	3547.84	-88.58	-2.44	3597.71	3546.12	3536.42		

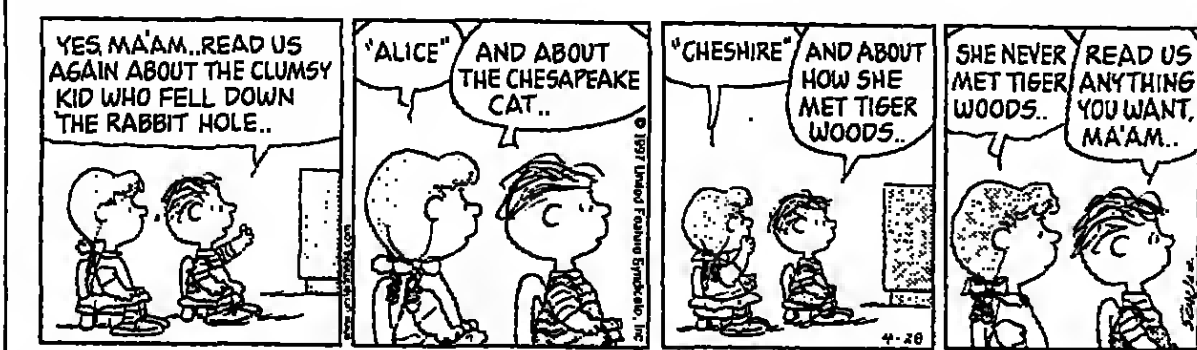
THE Daily Crossword

ACROSS

- Assaults
- Bounce lightly
- Drinks slowly
- Final, e.g.
- Fateful Roman date
- Embroidered loop
- Piece for Pavarotti
- Asian range
- Beethoven's "Fur"
- Woody's boy
- Gossip
- Past or present
- Marlene Dietrich film
- Indian chief
- Settled down
- Funny girl, DeGerees
- Part of the Rockies
- Tool
- State positively
- Primp's partner
- dieu (kneeling bench)
- Rule of conduct
- Is able to
- Area for an obi
- Casa room
- Usher's domain
- Co-star in 22A
- Cowboy show
- Tennille of song
- Recording group from Sweden
- "Tempest" sprite
- Was defeated
- Kind of cherry
- Kin
- Belgian waterway
- Bridge seat
- Punta del
- Timetable abbr.
- Captain Hook's aide

by Bernice Gordon

Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n' Jeff



HOROSCOPE FORECAST FOR SUNDAY, JUNE 1, 1997

By Thomas S. Pierson,
Astrologer, Carroll
Richter Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Make notes to yourself of any ideas which you have today, so you won't forget them in the days ahead. Stop dreaming about success and make it a reality for yourself and your loved ones who will be appreciative.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Check out some new recreations today which you can enjoy with your mate, however, stay within your budget. A wealthy friend can give you good advice concerning career activities, only if you are responsive.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) If you use your imagination today and try some new technique, you can get ahead much faster. Be sure you use much care in motion of any kind later, thereby you eliminate any difficulties present.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Contact important acquaintances today and make sure they know your intentions, thereby there won't be any misunderstandings. Avoid anyone who will hinder your progress and make your career activities less productive.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) If you get into any new activities today, be sure you keep them separate from your present endeavours. If you travel anywhere later this evening, don't over pack or you won't enjoy the experience ahead.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Sit down with your mate today and make plans for the days ahead, so that you can gain recognition from a bigwig. A business fellow, associate can give you good advice, however, only if you are willing to listen.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Seize an opportunity today which will help you to improve your reputation and make you more recognisable to those in authority. Make a plan with a fellow associate and labour together for greater success.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Be more energetic at your usual activities today, and you can gain greater benefits from your endeavours. Be more cooperative and helpful with your fellow associates and thereby you both will become successful.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) An individual connected with entertainment can be of assistance to you today, only if you are willing to learn. You can communicate well later this evening, however, don't be extravagant in your method of operation.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) This is a good day today to have guests into your home, both old friends and newcomers. You can finish up those home projects at this time, so make the best of this opportunity and make your residence more attractive.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Your usual allies can give you much support for your pet project today, so ask for their assistance and make your endeavour successful. Stay around friends who have a sense of humour similar to your own tonight.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) You'll have an opportunity to improve your financial situation today and possibly to gain some property. Make sure you have a plan for this or you could discover that your course of action will become fruitful.

Birthstone of June: Pearl — Moon Stone

French Open

Hingis, Seles, Chang advance, Ferreira withdraws

PARIS (AP) — Following a day of major upsets, top-ranked Martina Hingis routed her teen-age rival Anna Kournikova 6-1, 6-3 in 42 minutes Saturday to reach the fourth round of the French Open.

Unlike Friday, when No. 1 Pete Sampras, Thomas Muster and Jana Novotna were ousted, seeded players did better Saturday.

Second-seeded Michael Chang moved into the fourth round when his opponent, Stephane Simian, retired with a groin injury in the second set.

Chang was up 6-1, 5-2, when the Frenchman quit after 59 minutes.

France's Mary Pierce, the No. 10, shook off the effects of a stomach bug to dispatch Sandrine Testud 6-1, 6-3 and will next meet Seles.

Monica Seles, a three-



Michael Chang of the United States in action during his match against Stephane Simian of France in the French Open at Roland Garros May 31. Chang won the match as Simian withdrew (Reuters photo)



Mary Pierce of France in action during her match against Sandrine Testud of France in the French Open at Roland Garros. Pierce defeated Testud 6-1 6-3 (Reuters photo)

time champion, stormed into the fourth round by beating Nathalie Tauziat 6-0, 6-1 in 51 minutes.

But Wayne Ferreira, the 13th-seeded South African, withdrew because of an ankle injury, allowing his opponent, Petr Korda, to advance without having to play.

Two former champions from Spain, Sergi Bruguera and Arantxa Sanchez Vicario, also breezed into the fourth round.

Hingis, a 16-year-old Swiss sensation who is still unbeaten this year, demolished the 15-year-old Russian, who is No. 47 in the world and who still doesn't play a full schedule.

Having already beaten Kournikova twice in junior tournaments, Hingis was by far the more mature player in their first Grand Slam showdown.

The first set lasted only 17 minutes as Hingis toyed with her opponent.

There was more of a battle in the second set and Hingis dropped her serve while serving for the set. But she quickly regained control and the match ended when Kournikova hit a forehand into the net.

Hingis needed knee surgery after falling off a horse in April and was forced to miss seven weeks. She struggled in the previous round, staging a lucky three-set escape against Gloria Pizzichini.

Seles, who won the French Open title three straight years before she was stabbed in Germany in 1993, demolished Tauziat, a

Frenchwoman who had beaten American Venus Williams in the previous round.

The only reason the match lasted 51 minutes was because the last game of the first set took 10 minutes. Seles needed seven set points to finish the set, finally blasting an ace. Tauziat never held serve in the match and broke Seles once.

"I was happy with the way I played but I wasn't happy with the way I served. There was a lot of wind," said the third-seeded Seles, who played her best tennis of the tournament.

Sanchez Vicario, champion in 1989 and 1994, swept past to Dominique Van Roost of Belgium 6-0, 6-3. Sanchez was the runner-up

the past two years and is seeded sixth.

Bruguera, who won the title at Roland Garros in 1993 and 1994 and who is 16th-seeded this year, routed Dick Norman, a qualifier from Belgium, 6-3, 6-1, 6-3 in one hour, 27 minutes.

Mary Joe Fernandez, the 12th-seeded American, also moved into the fourth round with a 6-3 7-6 (7-4) victory over Flora Perfetti of Italy.

For Sampras, the French Open remains the only Grand Slam title still out of his reach. He was beaten Friday 6-2, 6-4, 2-6, 6-4 by Magnus Norman, a 65th-ranked Swede who was celebrating his 21st birthday.

"It's hard. I feel like I played very well my first couple of matches," Sampras said later. "But it

seems like something always comes up. It wasn't meant to be this year."

Sampras made no excuses, although he had come down with a case of diarrhoea the day before.

"I just didn't play well. He was the better man today, and I just have to accept that."

Norman said his first thought when he woke up was, "how about beating Pete Sampras today, on my 21st birthday?" I never thought it was going to be true.

Muster, the fifth-seeded 1995 champion, tumbled out against another low-ranked player, No. 66 Gustavo Kuerten of Brazil, who won 6-7 (3-7), 6-1, 6-3, 3-6, 6-4.

Defending champion Yevgeny Kafelnikov, the third-seeded Russian, needed five sets to overcome Frenchman Cedric Pioline 7-5, 6-4, 6-7 (7-3), 1-6, 6-4.

The women's field lost its highest seed so far when No. 4 Novotna, a semi-finalist last year, lost 3-6, 6-4, 6-4 to Nicole Pietrangeli, an American ranked No. 87 in the world who posted the best singles win of her career.

Steffi Graf, a five-time champion at Roland Garros who is the No. 2 seed, overcame a shaky start to advance to the fourth round with a 7-6 (7-4), 6-1 victory over Magui Serna of Spain.

Alex Corretja, the eighth-seeded Spaniard, advanced when his opponent Thierry Champion of France retired with a knee injury. Corretja was up 6-1, 3-0. Without having to face Sampras in the quarterfinals, Corretja could go far.



Sergi Bruguera of Spain plays a forehand shot during his match against Dick Norman of Belgium. Bruguera defeated Norman 6-3 6-1 6-3 (Reuters photo)

Grass looks better bet as No. 1

Sampras knocked out

PARIS (R) — After crashing out 6-2, 6-4, 2-6, 6-4 to Sweden's Magnus Norman at the French Open on Friday, the grass at Wimbledon will look a little greener to Pete Sampras than Thomas Muster.

But both will waste little time getting out of Paris, the stinging disappointment of third round losses enough to spoil anyone's weekend — even in the city of light.

Sampras can now at least look forward to the grass court season and the manicured lawns of the All England Club where he has won the title three times.

And after the way he has struggled on clay this season, even muster, a man who thought so much of Wimbledon he once threatened to remove all the grass around his home and replace it with asphalt, might not mind a change of pace from the slow clay to the tricky turf.

"Calling it a grass court season is maybe a bit too much, it's more like grass court weeks," said Muster, obviously not enamoured with the thought of spending too much time on the surface.

"I'm playing two tournaments before Wimbledon,



Pete Sampras applies tape to his racket (file photo)

then after Wimbledon the grass court season is finished."

While the French remains the only Grand Slam crown Muster has won, Sampras continues to find success at

Roland Garros cruelly elusive.

"It's hard to say if this tournament is jinxed," said Sampras, who had his best ever result at last year's French Open when he

made it to the semifinals.

"I feel like I played well my first couple of matches but it seems like there's always something that comes up."

"It will be a struggle for me to win here, I realise that."

If the red clay courts of Roland Garros are Sampras's nightmare then the same, and worse, can be said about the green lawns at Wimbledon for Muster.

In the four times Muster has even bothered to show up at Wimbledon, he has never won a match and winning the title seems about as possible as him winning on the moon.

Often at odds with all England club officials, he has not played there the last two years and has been angry over their failure to recognise his old number one ranking in the seeding list.

For Sampras, who is likely to play the warm-up event at Queen's Club in London, Wimbledon has always provided soothing therapy after the physical and mental beating he has taken at Roland Garros.

The things they are saying

at Roland Garros...

"I was impressed by the speed of the shots and I can understand why other players have problems against her. Her slice shot is incredible. She doesn't have to envy anybody on the men's circuit. I can tell you I had to play 100 percent. It was hard and good..." — said six foot seven (2.01m) Marc Rosset of Switzerland after a training session with women's champion Steffi Graf.

"In Brazil they would kill me, I live in Brazil. I really love Brazil..." — Brazilian Gustavo Kuerten after defeating 1995 champion Thomas Muster in the third-round and asked if, because he had a German grandmother, he had every considered playing for Germany in the Davis Cup.

"Well — you can always use 'ifs. I could have lost in three sets. I could have won in five sets. I could have won the first set..." — Cedric Pioline of France following his five-set loss to defending champion Yevgeny Kafelnikov.

"I feel like there are a lot of years left in my career to break through here. It just wasn't meant to be this year..." — Pete Sampras, still seeking the only major title he has never won, after being beaten by Norman and stomach "flu."

"I'm never afraid of anybody anywhere. There's nothing to get excited about. There are still four more rounds to go. If I get excited now where does that get me..." — unsmiling Ukrainian Andrei Medvedev asked why he wasn't more cheerful and if he had problems that were preventing him from smiling.

Saturday's French Open diary

• Yevgeny who? Men's title-holder Yevgeny Kafelnikov isn't a player who likes to hog the limelight. But he's getting a little fed up having to play "second-fiddle" at Roland Garros. "When I come to the French Open, everyone asks me for the badge. It's really amazing," says the tall young Russian. "Every time I step into the building, they say 'show me your badge'. I say: 'Look guys, I won this tournament last year. What's going on?'"

• McEnroe puts cafe before court: Former World No.1 John McEnroe has swapped his racket for his guitar at the Chesterfield Cafe in Paris to play a few Jimmy Hendrix and Doors numbers. Each year when he comes to Paris for the French Open fortnight, McEnroe always heads for a hard rocking session at the cafe near the Champs Elysees. He says it's the only venue he plays these days. McEnroe, an umpire's worst nightmare for his tantrums on court, won seven Grand Slams before hanging up his racket five years ago. He now runs an art gallery in New York.

• Rios bans media man: Marcelo Rios, voted the least popular player by the French media here, lived up to his reputation when he "banned" an Argentinian journalist from his post-match press conference. Rios tried to bar Benjamin Benzaquen, who works for a Chilean radio station, saying: "If that guy comes in, I'm leaving." Shrugged Benzaquen: "He doesn't like the things I say about him."

• It's a racket for Ferreira: South African star Wayne Ferreira, who has an apartment in the trendy Montmartre district of Paris, is thrilled with his new racket, which has propelled him into the third round of the French Open. "This is the best racket I have ever played with," says the former finalist. The racket was actually designed for big-hitting Australian Mark Philippoussis. But Ferreira says he has no intention of attempting to beat Philippoussis' 229 km/h fast-serve record.

Capobianco loses

fight over 4-year ban

ATHENS (R) — Australian sprinter Dean Capobianco has lost his fight against a four-year ban for a positive drug test.

International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF) President Primo Nepiolo said Saturday a "petition" by Capobianco for reinstatement in competition had been rejected.

"We did not accept his request. The (ban) decision is irrevocable. It just wasn't meant to be this year..." — Nepiolo told a news conference after an IAAF meeting.

Capobianco was banned for four years after he tested positive for the steroid stanozolol at a meeting on May 27, 1996, in Hengelo, the Netherlands.

But one day before that meeting he raced in Dijon, France, and was tested to be drug free.

"Capobianco asked for the Dijon sample to be preserved but his request was overlooked and the test destroyed."

He has accused the IAAF of destruction of evidence.

FIFA pro referees by 2000

ZURICH (R) — International soccer chiefs plan to have professional referees in place by the end of the century.

Sepp Blatter, general secretary of world governing body FIFA, said on Saturday there would be no change in the system of international referees before next year's World Cup finals but said a new way of paying referees would be set up afterwards.

"We want to start having professional referees who are under contract with FIFA," Blatter said. "We are trying to speed up the movement... By the end of the century we want to have the right project for professional referees."

Earlier this week FIFA discussed proposals to set up a pension fund for referees in a bid to stamp out corruption in the game.

FIFA believes officials are at their most vulnerable to bribes towards the end of their careers when they are thinking about their financial future.

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WEEKLY BRIDGE QUIZ

- Q. 1 - Both vulnerable, as South you hold:
- AS: $\spadesuit KQ7432$ $\heartsuit A$ $\diamondsuit AQ1084$
 Partner opens the bidding with four spades and the next player passes.
 What action do you take?
- Q. 2 - Neither vulnerable, as South you hold:
- AS: $\spadesuit Q9842$ $\heartsuit A$ $\diamondsuit Q10$ $\clubsuit A10985$
 The bidding has proceeded:
 SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST
 1C Pass 1S Pass
 2S Pass 2NT Pass
 What action do you take?
- Q. 3 - Neither vulnerable, as South you hold:
- AS: $\spadesuit AK8$ $\heartsuit Q982$ $\diamondsuit AQJ1073$
 The bidding has proceeded:
 WEST NORTH EAST SOUTH
 2C Pass 2S Pass 3S ?
 What do you respond?
- Q. 4 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:
- AS: $\spadesuit 872$ $\heartsuit QAK92$ $\diamondsuit AJ92$
 The bidding has proceeded:
 SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST
 1C 2C 2S 2S
 3S 3S 3S 3S
 What do you take?
- Q. 5 - Both vulnerable, as South you hold:
- AS: $\spadesuit AQJ106$ $\heartsuit QK9$ $\diamondsuit AA10952$
 Your right-hand opponent opens the bidding with one spade. What action do you take?
- Q. 6 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:
- AS: $\spadesuit AK8$ $\heartsuit QK1065$ $\diamondsuit AKKJ92$
 North opens the bidding with one spade. What do you respond?

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Jim Carie...in
THE MASK

Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30

CINEMA

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PLAZA

Bruce Willis... in
COLOUR OF NIGHT

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CONCORD

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Mussina one-hits Indians

BALTIMORE (R) — Mike Mussina hurled 8-1/3 perfect innings before settling for a one-hitter to lead the Baltimore Orioles to a 3-0 victory over the Cleveland Indians on Friday.

Mussina opened the ninth by getting Tony Fernandez to ground out to second base on a 3-1 pitch. But Sandy Alomar lined a clean single to left field on a 1-1 pitch. Mussina's 105th of the game, to give the Indians their only baserunner.

"When I got to 3-1 on Fernandez, I was thinking 'throw the ball down the middle' so I don't walk the guy and blow it on a walk," Mussina (7-1) said.

"I threw it down the middle with enough movement on it that he grounded to second base. It was one of those situations where he could have easily hit the ball to the gap."

"After that I threw a strike and a ball to sandy and I tried to come in, and I got it in but I got it up, and he happened to get his hands inside and he hit the ball to leftfield."

Roberto Alomar went 3-for-5 for the Orioles.

The game marked the 15th anniversary of the start of Cal Ripken's consecutive games played streak. He has now played in 2,366 consecutive games.

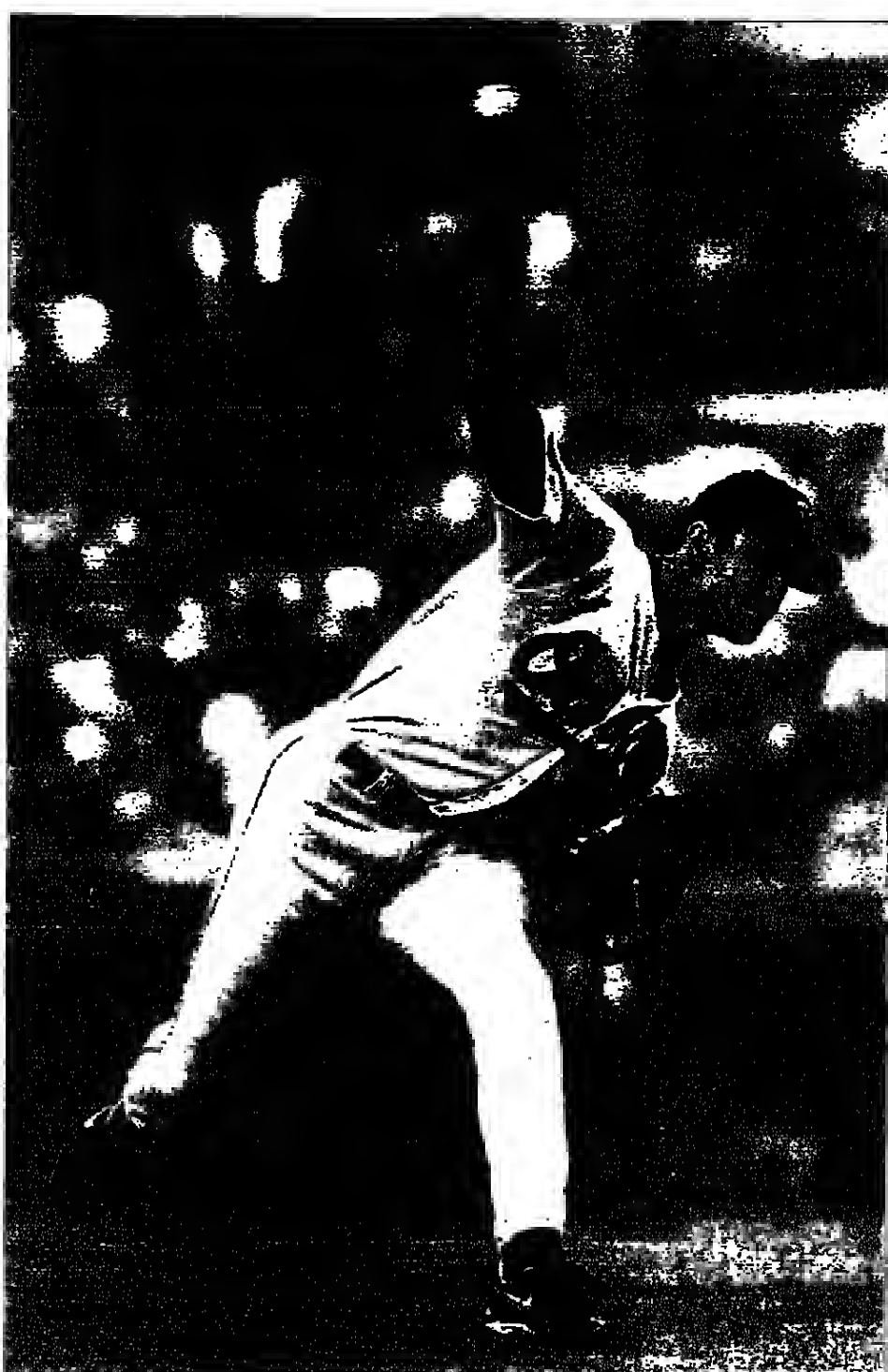
In Boston, Mo Vaughn hit three of Boston's six home runs to power the Red Sox to a 10-4 victory over the New York Yankees.

Vaughn passed Tris Speaker for 15th on Boston's all-time RBI list at 571 with his solo home run in the fourth against Danny Rios, who was making his Major League debut. He homered off Ramiro Mendoza in the third inning and got his third against Graeme Lloyd in the eighth.

In Milwaukee, Cal Eldred threw his first complete game shutout, a three-hitter, in more than three years and Jeff Cirillo hit his first grand slam as the Milwaukee Brewers beat the Chicago White Sox, 5-0.

Albert Belle stretched his hitting streak to 25 games with a second-inning single for Chicago.

At Texas, Johnny Damon highlighted a three-run second inning with a two-run homer and Glendon Rusch went seven-plus innings for his first win in eight starts as the Kansas City Royals edged the Texas Rangers 3-



Baltimore Orioles pitcher Mike Mussina delivers a pitch against the Cleveland Indians at Camden Yards. Mussina took a perfect game into the ninth inning (Reuters photo)

2. In Anaheim, Matt Lawton's run-scoring single snapped a seventh-inning tie and lifted the Minnesota Twins to a 4-3 victory over the Anaheim Angels. Darrin Jackson led off the seventh and reached base when Anaheim starter Jason Dickson (6-2) misplayed his grounder up the

first-base line. Jackson moved to third base on two groundouts, and Lawton followed with a single up the middle.

Bob Tewksbury (2-5) pitched seven innings and scattered 12 hits and three runs with a walk and four strikeouts to earn the win. In Seattle, Phil Nevin snuffed a sixth-inning tie

with an RBI double and added a run-scoring single in the eighth, and Felipe Lira went 6-1/3 strong innings for his fourth straight win, leading the Detroit Tigers to a 5-2 victory over the Seattle Mariners.

Ken Griffey hit his Major League-leading 24th home run in the first inning.

In Oakland, Ariel Prieto allowed one earned run over seven innings and Jose Canseco and Scott Spiezo each drove in three runs to power the Oakland Athletics to a 12-7 victory over the Toronto Blue Jays.

Prieto (4-3) allowed two runs and five hits with two walks and five strikeouts before the Oakland bullpen struggled and let the Blue Jays get back into the game.

Jason Giambi went 3-for-4 with two RBIs and Spiezo, Geronimo Berroa and Scott Brosius all had two hits for the Athletics, who banged out 14 hits.

American League

Boston	10	New York	4
Baltimore	3	Cleveland	0
Milwaukee	5	Chicago	0
Kansas City	3	Texas	2
Minnesota	4	Anaheim	3
Detroit	5	Seattle	2
Oakland	12	Toronto	7

National League

Cincinnati	5	Chicago	1
Florida	4	Colorado	3 (12 Inn)
Pittsburgh	10	Montreal	2
Atlanta	3	San Francisco	2
Ny Mets	7	Philadelphia	3
San Diego	9	Houston	2
St Louis	2	Los Angeles	1

Jazz aim for Chicago's crown in NBA finals starting tonight

CHICAGO (R) — Is Chicago's crown slipping?

The Utah Jazz hope so as they make their first trip to the National Basketball Association finals Sunday to challenge the Chicago Bulls, champions in the four of the past six years that Michael Jordan did not leave them to play baseball.

Karl Malone, a narrow winner over Jordan for league Most Valuable Player honors, and his running mate John Stockton have the Jazz playing with the kind of discipline and efficiency formerly identified with the Bulls.

Meanwhile, Jordan and company admit they have sputtered even while winning 11 playoff games and dropping just two.

"We know we've got to play better than we've played right now and bring our level of play up, particularly on the offensive end of the court," said Chicago coach Phil Jackson.

The Bulls had the best record in the NBA during the regular season at 69-13 with Utah second best at 64-18 — but the Jazz have been the best since the All-Star break with a 46-3 record, including the playoffs. Utah has not lost at home in 21 straight games.

Still the Jazz must fight against being, as Malone put it, "awe-struck" against players who have appeared in 134 more finals games — 134-0.

"The most important thing for us to do is to believe we belong there," said Malone.

"It's been 12 years coming, it's an awesome feeling, but we're not going to Chicago just to go there," he said. "Our whole attitude is 'not to go up there and concede anything.'"

The starting matchups appear to favor Chicago.

Jordan and Ron Harper have significant size advantages over Jeff Hornacek and Stockton at guard. Scottie Pippen — if healthy — may be the league's best small forward, while Bryon Russell is still trying to get people to spell his name correctly. Steady Luc Longley has a veteran's advantage over fellow role-player Greg Ostertag in the middle, though the active second-year Jazz center held his own against the Houston Rockets' great Hakeem Olajuwon in the conference finals.

Only at power forward, a position defined by Malone, does Utah have an edge — but the mailman must deliver with the ever-annoying Dennis Rodman nipping at his heels.

Rodman, the six-time rebounding king, is a past master at provoking opponents into self-destruction while staying just inside the line himself, but the referees this year are pulling his



Michael Jordan

leash ever shorter, and he has annoyed his teammates almost as much as opponents.

Rodman has at least one technical foul in every post season game he has played this year. Malone has stayed focused so far and Utah has shown a championship brand of concentration.

The Jazz — especially Malone and Stockton — themselves play a distractingly physical style, especially setting picks in a grey area of legality. Some of the Rockets feel Stockton got free to make his buzzer-beating, conference-clinching 3-pointer only because Malone had Clyde Drexler in a bear hug.

If it came down to a contest of the teams' number two stars, Utah might have an edge.

Pippen suffered a sprained left foot in Wednesday's Eastern Conference clincher. He said he could have gone back in, and tests found no serious problems, but his fitness remains to be seen.

Stockton, the NBA's all-time assists and steals leader, meanwhile took over his conference clincher. In the last 3:13, he personally outscored Houston 13-6. Of Utah's last 19 points, he scored 13 — and got assists on the other six. Sometimes it has seemed as though the problems suffered by the Bulls arose from boredom. Jordan, these playoffs' leading scorer at 30.5 points per game, in particular seems to need some extra drama.

The nine-time scoring champ has said Malone's narrow victory in the MVP

voting would be "a motivational factor for me" but insisted he held "no animosity, no jealousy at all."

Malone, the playoffs' second leading scorer at 26.9 points per game, successfully campaigned for the MVP award even while saying in reality Jordan probably deserved it any year he played.

Chicago's defence has bailed it out of several games this post season, finding a gear down the stretch that other teams simply don't have.

Miami Heat centre Alonzo Mourning said the Bulls were so quick at jumping in

and out of double-teams during the Eastern Conference finals that they seemed to have seven men on the court.

Chicago and Utah split two games in the regular season, each winning at home. The Bulls, who host the first two and if necessary last two games of the best-of-seven series, have never lost a final.

"I don't think anyone is going to win again until Michael retires," vanquished Heat coach Pat Riley said. "I think Chicago's going to win it against anybody."

Braves beat Giants 3-2 in 12 innings, Cubs lose

ATLANTA (R) — Michael Tucker's one-out single scored Kenny Lofton with the winning run in the bottom of the ninth inning, lifting the Atlanta Braves to a 3-2 victory over the San Francisco Giants Friday.

Lofton overcame an 0-2 count to draw a walk from pitcher Doug Henry and then stole second base. San Francisco manager Dusty Baker argued that Tucker interfered with catcher Rick Wilkins.

Tucker then lined the next pitch just over the glove of leaping first baseman J.T. Snow to give the Braves their 10th win in 13 games.

In Chicago, Pete Schourek allowed a run and four hits in seven innings, and Barry Larkin had a solo homer and a double to lead the Cincinnati Reds to a 5-1 victory over the Chicago Cubs.

Schourek (4-4) walked one and struck out two in defeating the Cubs for the second time this week. Larkin hit his second homer of the season in the seventh inning and scored twice.

At Florida, Bobby Bonilla's RBI single with one out in the bottom of the 12th inning scored Devon White with the winning run as the Florida Marlins edged the Colorado Rockies 4-3.

In Houston, starting pitcher Will Cunnane had two hits, including a two-run triple, and allowed one run over six innings in his first Major League start to lead the San Diego Padres to a 9-2 victory over the Houston Astros.

The win ended a five-game losing streak for the Padres, who had allowed 46 runs in the slide.

San Diego's Tony Gwynn had two hits in three at-bats to raise his average to .408, but left the game in the fourth inning with a slight strain of his right hamstring and is listed as day-to-day.

In New York, Dave Mlicki allowed two runs over six innings for his first win in more than 20 months and Todd Hundley, Butch Huskey and Carl Everett hit solo homers as the red-hot New York Mets cruised to a 7-3 victory over the Philadelphia Phillies.

In Pittsburgh, Kevin Young belted a three-run homer and drove in four runs, and reliever Chris Peters earned the win and added a two-run double, leading the Pittsburgh Pirates to a 10-2 victory over the Montreal Expos.

The Pirates jumped on Montreal starter Jeff Juden (5-1) for three runs in the first inning, breaking his 10-game winning streak.

"For a young team, this is important as a confidence builder more than anything," Young said. "It's still early in the season, the number one thing we must do is grow and learn. The second half of the season is when we'll find out what we are made of."

In St. Louis, Delino Deshields' bases-loaded walk with two out in the ninth inning scored Mark Sweeney with the winning run as the St. Louis Cardinals nipped the Los Angeles Dodgers 2-1.



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Killings, bombings in last days of Algerian elections

ALGIERS (R) — Algerian newspapers Saturday reported more killings and two car bombs in the final days of the country's parliamentary election campaign.

Muslim guerrillas stormed Fazine mountain hamlet in the coastal province of Tipaza, 60 kilometres southwest of Algiers, late Thursday killing 14 people, said the Arabic-language daily Al Khabar. The dead included four elderly men, two women and two pro-government armed villagers, it said.

Al Watan newspaper put the number killed at 11 and said the rebels cut the throats of the villagers.

Guerrillas killed a man Thursday night, kidnapped four of his daughters and then blew up their home in Demiat village, 70 kilometres south of Algiers, Al Khabar said. It said gunmen also killed a taxi driver at a road block in Tipaza region.

Guerrillas kidnapped a peasant last Sunday near Sidi Moussa, 40 kilometres south of Algiers, Al Khabar said. They asked him to help kill pro-government gunmen by inviting them to his home, it said. There was no word on his fate.

Troops, backed by helicopter gunships, hunted guerrillas at Lala Oum

Explosion hits Algiers cinema; 3 hurt

ALGIERS (AFP) — At least three people were injured Saturday when an explosion rocked a cinema in the centre of the Algerian capital, witnesses at the scene said.

The explosion came five days before Algeria's first legislative elections since a virtual civil war with Islamist extremists broke out five years ago.

Though the blast at the youth cinema on busy Larbi Ben M'hidi street was weak, neighbourhood residents suspected it was caused by a bomb.

Those injured were a young man, aged 27, and two teenagers — one 14, the other 16. All were taken to the central Mustapha Hospital.

Fatma Mountain, 90 kilometres east of Algiers, Al Khabar said. The newspaper said security forces shot dead a rebel leader in the area.

A car bomb exploded in downtown Chlef City, 150 kilometres west of Algiers, Thursday damaging a bank and shops, Al Watan said. Al Khabar said another car bomb went off by a car market in Boumerdes region, east of Algiers. No casualties were reported in either bombing.

More than 7,000 candidates running as independents or members of 39 political parties began final campaigning for next week's June 5 general election, promising peace and an easing of economic hardships caused by five years of civil strife. Main leaders focused on the big cities. The main secular Socialist

Forces Front (FFS) urged about 5,000 supporters Friday in Algiers to elect its candidates, who want negotiations between the opposition, including the outlawed Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), and the government.

Prime Minister Ahmed Ouyahia, campaigning for the pro-government national democratic rally, told a gathering in Algiers that peace would come when security forces wipe out the guerrillas.

About 60,000 people have died in Algeria's violence since early 1992 when the authorities cancelled a general election in which FIS had taken a commanding lead.

Some of the 743,237 Algerian expatriate voters began voting Saturday in countries such as Belgium ahead of the polling in Algeria.



THIRD SUSPECT KILLED AND DUMPED: An Israeli policeman covers the body of Ali Mohammad Jumhour, a Palestinian said to have sold land to Israelis, who was found shot dead near the West Bank city of Ramallah on Saturday. Jumhour was the third land dealer found dead since Justice Minister Freih Abu Medeen was quoted in published report as saying that Palestinians who sold land to Jews faced execution (see story on page 1) (Reuters photo)

French vote on knife-edge, far-right and abstainers hold key on Sunday

PARIS (AFP) — France was preparing Saturday to vote in closely-contested, run-off elections with the opposition Socialists saying they were confident of an historic upset win over President Jacques Chirac's centre-right coalition.

As campaigning ended Saturday on the eve of the legislative ballots, the difference between victory and defeat could hinge on the score of the far-right National Front, which scored 15 per cent in the first round last weekend.

The 32 per cent of the electorate who abstained in last weekend's first round could also prove crucial in deciding if Mr. Chirac wins his electoral gamble — or is forced to cohabit with a Socialist premier for the next five years.

"Down to the wire," headlined Le Parisien, which Friday flouted French electoral law and published an opinion poll showing the Socialist-led opposition winning a comfortable majority in the 577-seat National Assembly.

But with the scores so close, a swing of just a few per cent nationally could spell the difference between victory and

defeat.

On Saturday a new poll by the IPSOS polling institute put the Socialists within sight of victory without the communists, with whom they have significant differences notably on Europe.

The poll gave the Socialist Party (PS) led by Lionel Jospin between 237-295 seats, against 243-303 for the Centre-Right Rally for the Republic (RPR) and Union for French Democracy (UDF) bloc.

The communists would win 35-37 seats, and Jean-Marie Le Pen's far-right National Front 0-6 seats, it said.

Also Saturday another paper flouted the rules and published the results of six polls taken during the week, all of which gave victory to the Socialists and their communist and ecologist allies — some with the Socialists not even needing the communists' support to form a government.

Mr. Chirac and his followers have warned voters that cohabitation between a Gaullist president and a Socialist premier would lead to "incoherence" which would permanently hobble

France.

"Cohabitation would be permanent division. France would be set against itself, it would be a Chirac-Jospin match every day," said outgoing National Assembly Speaker Philippe Seguin, the favourite as France's next prime minister if the right scrapes back in.

The centre-right majority is pinning its hopes on a "dream ticket" comprising Mr. Seguin and former Economy Minister Alain Madelin, a fervent advocate of free-market economics.

Mr. Chirac dissolved parliament on April 21 arguing he needed to renew his parliamentary mandate for the next five years, in particular to take France into a European single currency.

Socialist leader Mr. Jospin has said that he would impose key conditions on French entry to EMU arguing for a softening of the strict convergence criteria and more priority on tackling France's record 12.8 per cent joblessness.

National Front leader Le Pen is the chief anti-European in the French poll race, and the way his supporters switch their votes in the second

round could be crucial.

While openly despising Mr. Chirac, he has, however, refused to give straight advice to his supporters on how to vote — but the right fears more than ever before could swing to the left in a protest vote.

Two weeks ago Mr. Chirac's gamble appeared to be a relatively safe bet. The ruling bloc, which had a crushing 80 per cent majority in the outgoing assembly, was predicted to win comfortably, albeit with a reduced majority.

On the eve of the run-off ballots, after a week in which Premier Alain Juppe announced his resignation following the disastrous first-round results, things are far from clear.

On Saturday evening Mr. Chirac was due to attend the French Rugby Cup final at the Parc Des Princes Stadium in Paris, flanked by Mr. Seguin in the presidential box — and Mr. Jospin seated between the opposing team managers' stand.

The eyes of France will be on them.

Tearful reunion between jailed British nurses and their families

DAMMAM (AP) — Two jailed British nurses charged with murdering an Australian colleague had a tearful reunion with their families Saturday, a lawyer representing them said.

Deborah Parry, 41, and Lucille McLauchlan, 31, met with their families for 1 1/2 hours at the Dammam central prison in eastern Saudi Arabia, said Michael Dark, one of their lawyers.

"The talk of the death penalty is putting the families through a very trying situation," Mr. Dark said.

He said Parry met with her sister, Sandra, and her brother-in-law, Jonathan Ashbee, while McLauchlan met with her father, Stan, and her fiancé, Grant Ferrie.

Mr. Dark said the relatives will meet with the nurses again Sunday before returning home. Parry and McLauchlan are charged with killing Yvonne Gilford, whose body was found Dec. 11 in her room at the King Fahd Military

Medical Complex in the eastern Saudi city of Dhahran, where the three nurses worked.

They face the death penalty if convicted. Under Saudi Arabia's Islamic law, the victim's family can demand the death penalty or accept blood money. Executions are commonly carried out by beheading.

Lawyers representing Gilford's brother, Frank, dismissed Saturday British press reports that their client had decided to seek clemency for the British nurses.

Gilford is resolute in the appropriateness of his decision regarding the death penalty in this case because of the brutal way his sister was murdered," said Jim Phipps, one of the lawyers representing Gilford's family.

"She was stabbed in the neck and in the heart several times, and when she fell she was stabbed in the back, and then she was suffocated and also badly beaten," Mr. Phipps said.

Gilford would like the nurses' defence lawyers to stop attacking him. Asking for the death penalty is within his rights and he wants to stop being attacked for it," Mr. Phipps said.

He also said Mr. Gilford was asking Salah Hejailan, the nurses' principle lawyer, to stop smearing his sister's memory and to stop trying the case in the media.

Mr. Hejailan told the Arab News last week that Yvonne Gilford was a money-lender known for charging exorbitant interests.

In an effort to plead for clemency, the jailed nurses have sent an open letter to Frank Gilford. The letter was published in a British tabloid Saturday.

"You should know that we are totally innocent of the charge against us and were not involved in any way in the death of your sister," the nurses wrote.

Egyptian state hospitals keep prohibition of female excision

CAIRO (AFP) — Egypt said Saturday it will ignore a court recommendation to lift a ban on female circumcision in state hospitals.

"We will not go back on our ban on circumcision, and this decision is well past the purely administrative stage because we are well into a social and medical campaign in villages to prevent it," Health Minister Ismail Sallam said.

The minister, quoted by the government daily Al Ahram, said the women's health campaign was aimed at correcting "erroneous beliefs in rural areas."

Supporters of female excision — the removal of all or part of the clitoris and sometimes the labia as well — say it is important to quell women's sexual desires before marriage.

Egypt's highest civil court, the Council of State, recommended Tuesday that female excision should be legal although it is not manda-

tory under Islam.

A lower Cairo court, which generally follows the council's recommendations, is to rule on June 24 on a case brought by Islamic fundamentalists, doctors and lawyers against the decision to ban excision in hospitals.

A government study released in February showed that 97 per cent of Egyptian women are excised — 99.5 per cent in rural areas and 94 per cent in towns.

A debate over female excision erupted after a 14-year-old girl died while a doctor was carrying out the operation in August last year.

The mufti of Egypt has issued a fatwa decreeing that excision should be allowed even though it is not mandatory under Islam, while the head of Al Azhar, the highest Sunni Muslim authority, said doctors should decide whether the operation was necessary.



SPICE GIRLS IN ISTANBUL: Members of English pop group Spice Girls Melanie Brown (2nd L), Melanie Chisholm (2nd R), Geri Halliwell (R), Emma Bunton (3rd L) and Victoria Addams gesture during a news conference on Saturday in Istanbul. Spice Girls arrived in Istanbul to promote their concert which will be held October 12 (Reuters photo)

Iraq receives one-third of promised food

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraq has so far received one-third of the total food pledged under a U.N. "oil-for-food" deal which runs out in June, a U.N. official in Baghdad said Saturday.

"So far 720,000 tonnes of food have arrived in Iraq, or one-third of the products which are to be imported," said Eric Falt, assistant to the U.N.'s humanitarian coordinator in Iraq.

Under the oil-for-food deal which came into effect in December, Iraq is allowed to export \$2 billion of oil over six months to raise money to buy food and medicine.

The deal, enshrined in U.N. Resolution 986, allows Iraq to import 2.2 million tonnes of food before the United Nations decides whether to re-open the accord on June 9.

Iraqi Oil Minister Amer Mohammad Rashid said Friday Iraq had exported 120 million barrels of crude allowed under the deal.

The first shipments of food arrived in March, while medicine began arriving earlier this month.

Mr. Falt said the U.N. Sanctions Committee had approved around 300 contracts out of 540 submitted by Iraq so far for the purchase of food and medical supplies.

Turkish coalition plagued by defections and discord

ANKARA (R) — Turkey's first Islamist-led government, reeling from mouthings of attacks by the secularist elite, lost its absolute majority in parliament Friday with the defection of a senior conservative MP.

Yildirim Aktuna, a member of the junior coalition partner True Path Party (DYP), handed out copies of his resignation letter at a news conference and said he would submit it to party leader Tansu Ciller later in the day.

His decision, long anticipated, left the government of Islamist Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan clinging to just 275 seats in the 550-member parliament, one short of the majority needed to win a confidence vote. Two seats are vacant.

Mr. Erbakan held almost three hours of talks with Ms. Ciller late Friday but the putative partners were unable to agree on True Path proposals for formation of an "election government" to lead the country to early polls.

"We in the DYP have established that going to elections is the only solution," Ms. Ciller told reporters after the talks. "We must act together with our partners and our work will continue in the coming days."

Mr. Erbakan left without comment to attend what remained of the annual Prime Minister's Cup

Football match at a city stadium.

"The (Islamist) coalition partner is attempting to change the basic principles of the republic... and use religion as a political tool," said the dissident Aktuna, a former health minister well-known for his anti-Islamist views.

In a further twist of the knife, Mr. Aktuna said four more defections from True Path were in the pipeline, possibly as early as Monday. Four Conservative MPs resigned over last weekend.

This latest blow to the coalition, already facing enormous pressure from the secularist armed forces and a court challenge to Mr. Erbakan's Islam-based Welfare Party, set the stage for tough bargaining between the coalition leaders.

The Istanbul Stock Exchange, which had widely expected Mr. Aktuna's departure, barely fluttered on the news. It later closed up 4.32 per cent ahead of the Erbakan-Ciller meeting in active trade fuelled by liquidity, brokers said.

Ms. Ciller had promised her secularist, pro-Western party she would press Mr. Erbakan to make her prime minister in a caretaker government that would take the country to the polls in the coming months. Elections would normally be due by the year 2000.

The 11-month-old alliance between Mr. Erbakan, modern Turkey's first Islamist leader, and Ms. Ciller has been plagued by deep-set conflicts over the role of Islam in public life.

In February, top army officers demanded Mr. Erbakan approve and implement a package of 18 anti-Islamist measures, effectively a crackdown against his own grassroots voters.

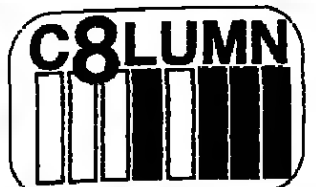
These included the closing of Koranic education for young students, bans on Islamic-style clothing and tight restrictions on Islamist business and media.

Mr. Erbakan's subsequent foot-dragging set the government on a collision course with the secularist establishment led by the senior armed forces commanders, with pressure mounting by the day on True Path deputies to abandon the Islamists.

Mr. Erbakan and Ms. Ciller were set to swap jobs next year under their power-sharing deal.

But Ms. Ciller now says she can ward off anti-Islamist pressure on the government from the army if she takes the top job sooner.

That pressure was expected to increase further Saturday when the National Security Council, dominated by the military, holds its next scheduled meeting to review progress in the anti-Islamist campaign.



Treating snorer stopped bedwetting

LONDON (R) — Treating patients for snoring problems might also help to stop bedwetting, U.S. doctors said. Williams Steers and Paul Suratt of the University of Virginia reported the case of a 60-year-old man who wet the bed twice a night after prostate surgery. To his wife's understandable distress, the man also snored and suffered from sleep apnoea — a snoring-related condition in which breathing stops during the night. They advised treating the apnoea with continuous positive airway pressure, which involves putting a mask tightly over the nose and delivering compressed air at night. It worked. They wrote in a letter to the Lancet Medical Journal. Not only did the man stop snoring but he also stopped wetting the bed. Steers and Suratt said they did not know just why this happened but they suggested that treating sleep apnoea could help other cases of night-time incontinence.

'Gangsta rap' is a warning to America, police expert says

MIAMI (R) — You might not like the sound of "gangsta rap" but its harsh lyrics reflect real, deep-rooted problems in American society, a police expert said. The lyrics of the black music genre have been condemned by politicians, police organisations and others as being violent, sexist and anti-white. But Sgt. Ron Stallworth of the Utah Department of Public Safety said, "these kids are telling you what's wrong in our society. You might not like the message ... but it is saying something America needs to know." Stallworth, an acknowledged expert on the music and its political aspects, addressed the national conference in Miami, on preventing crime in the black community. Gangsta rap has a controversial and bloody history. Two prominent rappers have been murdered recently — Tupac Shakur in September and the Notorious B.I.G. in March. A song written by Ice-T, "cop killer," caused a national furor in 1992 and was even denounced by President George Bush.

Friend says Bob Dylan in hospital under false name

NEW YORK (R) — Singer Bob Dylan is in a hospital under an assumed name being treated for an infection producing swelling around the heart but his life was not considered in danger, a source close to Dylan's family said. The source declined to say where the hospital is but added that it is not in New York as some media have reported. Dylan, 56, called off a European tour Wednesday after his publicists in London said he was admitted to a hospital suffering from a potentially life-threatening infection.

Spanish scientists find possible new human species

MADRID (R) — A group of Spanish scientists said they discovered a new species of human beings in a 780,000-year-old fossil, possibly the oldest known European. "We believe this is a new species, that we have called hominid ancestor," Jose Maria Bermudez de Castro of the National Museum of Natural Sciences in Madrid told a news conference. "It's a species that we consider the common ancestor of modern humanity and the neanderthals." Bermudez de Castro and a team of Spanish paleoanthropologists found the fossilised remains of a boy with a remarkably modern face in a limestone cave in Spain's central Atapuerca mountains during an excavation from 1994 to 1996. They said the unique combination of features, with a face like the modern homo sapiens species and a jaw and brow similar to the extinct neanderthals, led them to name a new species.